THE ART OF COLOUR DECORATION

BY

J·D·CRACE

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THE ART OF COLOUR DECORATION

BEING AN EXPLANATION OF THE PURPOSES TO BE KEPT IN VIEW AND THE MEANS OF ATTAINING THEM

BY

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WITH FACSIMILES OF COLOURED DRAWINGS BY THE AUTHOR AND OTHER ILLUSTRATIONS

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PREFACE

I WOULD briefly state the objects of this work—what it attempts to do and what is purposely left aside.

Its main object is to point out, as simply as may be, to what extent the art of colour decoration is, or should be, controlled by natural laws, which are constant and quite independent of style. A clear understanding of these will save the practitioner from many useless experiments and many blunders.

Again, its object is to explain how colour affects Architecture, and to show, quite apart from the question of colour harmony, how all-important is the distribution of colour *values* in assisting or marring Architectural effect.

On the other hand, no attempt is made in these pages to deal with the history of Decorative Art, nor to dwell on the differences of style or character ; neither is it attempted to deal exhaustively with colour harmony.

Briefly, the writer's purpose is to show the Decorator how to approach his subject, what should be his legitimate aims, what he should seek to avoid, and how his difficulties may be eased by a knowledge of certain facts and laws which are unchangeable, whatever the style or whatever the elaboration of the work.

Another purpose will be served if it does anything to convince the pictorial artist who engages in mural painting that his picture, standing alone, without the support of other colouring to connect it with the architecture, can never beautify the building itself—on the contrary, it may often disturb appreciation of the architecture by its isolated interest.

The finest work only becomes truly decorative, however excellent, when it is made a part of the whole. The modern painter fears adjacent colour. The great masters had no such fears, but invariably so extended the colouring beyond the limits of the picture as to express and beautify the structure, making that the appropriate setting of the gem.

PREFACE

That the Illustrations are largely drawn from Italy is because that country is rich in examples by men whose names shine in the history of Art; not because the arguments used apply particularly to the work of one country or of one style. Of them also it should be said that they do not profess to be highly finished drawings of the examples delineated; rather, they are reproductions of sketches made at intervals during a period of some forty-five years, with the object of recording the effective use of colour as a means of expressing form. Where detail has not seemed important to this result that has been but lightly indicated. But the harmonious relation of colour to colour and their respective values have been carefully set down, sufficient detail being given to enable the reader to recognise its effect on the decorative result.

That these drawings have been admirably reproduced by Messrs. Vaus and Crampton, and in one case (Plate VII) by Messrs. Hudson and Kearns, I gladly acknowledge; nor must I omit to record my gratitude to the publisher for his care in supervising the production of the book.

J. D. C.

London; December 1912

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	PREFACE	ix
	CONTENTS	xi
	LIST OF PLATES	xiii
I	INTRODUCTION	1
II	THE DISTRIBUTION OF VALUES	4
III	THE SCHEME OF COLOUR	9
IV	EXPLANATION OF SURFACE AND CONTOUR	14
V	TREATMENT BY GREAT MASTERS	18
VI	THE DECORATIVE PICTURE	70
VII	IMITATIONS	75
VIII	MODERN WORK	78
IX	HINTS ON PRACTICE	86
	EPILOGUE	89

LIST OF PLATES

Plate			
	VAULTING OF THE BAPTISTERY (*S. Giovanni Battista*), SIENA	*Frontispiece*	
I	(A) VAULTING, S. GIOVANNI EVANGELISTA, PARMA (B) DECORATION OF THE DOME, S. VITTORE, MILAN	*facing page*	22
II	(A) DECORATION OF RIB OF VAULTING, CAPELLA DEL SANTO CORPORALE, ORVIETO (B) LINING OF ARCHED RECESS IN CHAPEL, SALA DEL CAMBIO, PERUGIA	*following Plate I*	
III	CEILING OF THE SMALL CHAPEL ADJOINING THE SALA DI CAMBIO, PERUGIA	*facing page*	28
IV	CAMERA DEL PSYCHE, PALAZZO DEL T., MANTUA	*following Plate III*	
V	CEILING OF CHAPEL, PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE	*facing page*	34
VI	CEILING OF CHANCEL, CHAPEL, PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE	*following Plate V*	
VII	CENTRE VAULT OF LOGGIA, VILLA MADAMA, ROME	*facing page*	40
VIII	SALA DEGLI ARAZZI, PALAZZO DUCALE, MANTUA	*page*	44
IX	GALLERIA, PALAZZO DUCALE, MANTUA	,,	45
X	CAMERA DEI CESARI, PALAZZO DEL T., MANTUA	*following Plate IX*	
XI	VAULT OF THE OPEN LOGGIA, PALAZZO DORIA, GENOA	*facing page*	52
XII	FRIEZE AND VAULTED CORNICE OF THE SALA DEI GIGANTI, PALAZZO DORIA, GENOA	*following Plate XI*	
XIII	CEILING AND CORNICE IN THE PALAZZO GRIMANI DI SANTA MARIA FORMOSA, VENICE	,,	*Plate XII*
XIV	PART OF THE WOODEN PANELLED CEILING OF THE NAVE, SANTA MARIA DEI MIRACOLI, VENICE	*facing page*	60
XV	CEILING OF SACRISTY, S. SEBASTIANO, VENICE	*following Plate XIV*	
XVI	PART OF THE CEILING OF NAVE, S. SEBASTIANO, VENICE	*page*	66
XVII	PART OF THE CEILING OF THE GREAT HALL, SCUOLA DI S. ROCCO, VENICE	*facing Plate XVI*	
XVIII	"THE ANNUNCIATION" WALL PAINTING, SANTA MARIA NOVELLA, FLORENCE	*page*	72
XIX	CEILING AT LONGLEAT	*facing page*	78
XX	ENTRANCE STAIRCASE, THE NATIONAL GALLERY	*following Plate XIX*	

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE use of colour for the adornment of Architecture hardly needs an apology. It is as ancient as Architecture itself, and has ever remained the handmaid of the nobler art. Not that the Decorative Art has always occupied the same relative position to the Structural.

At times colour has been clearly subordinate to structural effect ; at other times the walls themselves have been but fields for colour ; pages on which colour was to write the story or appeal to the imagination. Nor are these two variations of relationship limited by epochs of time only ; for we find at many periods when architecture had all the qualities and power of supremacy, occasional abdications of that supremacy in favour of the more facile art. As examples of this we may take two of world-wide fame : Giotto's Chapel at Padua and Michael Angelo's Sistine Chapel, in both of which the entire absence of structural "architecture" is conspicuous. It is, however, desirable to remember that in both instances the field was occupied by men of supreme genius—men who influenced all who came after them—and that the interest of their work is now neither architectural nor strictly decorative, but is concentrated in the artistic power expressed in every part of the whole.

Decorative intention is not absent in either ; but neither can be judged by a decorative standard alone. Both are really great landmarks in the History of European Art.

Let us see then what we really mean by "Colour Decoration," and we shall then better understand what our aims may be, and by what standards the result must be criticised. It is obvious that the title may include—does in fact include—the highest walks of pictorial art ; for have we not just considered two examples of such ? But for our present purpose it is clear that the limit of the subject must be less wide ; and whilst admitting the enormous gain which decorative work must always derive from the perfection of the executive merit of its parts, whether pictorial or not, it need hardly be pointed out that, however useful may be the axioms and suggestions which can be imparted in writing, for general guidance, nothing that can be said in words

can much affect the excellence of artistic skill employed in the execution of the detail. That is a matter very important to the final interest of the result, but is beyond the scope of this work.

For our purposes, "Colour Decoration" must mean the actual distribution of colour, whether in masses, bands, lines, ornamentation or pictures, *so far as it concerns the beautifying of the structure or surface to which it is applied*, not necessarily for the special merit of its own details.

This is, in fact, the limit within which theory, axioms, or suggestions can have any practical value.

We have then to consider the several circumstances and conditions under which Colour may be used for the adornment of an interior; how far these conditions are general, how far particular. Many of the conditions affecting the use of Colour Decoration may be classed as general. Perhaps, one of the first importance is that which depends on the answer to the question, "Is the decoration to be applied with the object of aiding the expression and enhancing the beauty of architectural forms already existing, or is it to be a substitute for architectural form altogether?"

Now it is evident that the two conditions here presented as alternatives offer to the decorator two entirely different problems, which, moreover, he must approach from quite different stand-points. In the former case his attitude must be throughout one of respect for the structural beauties of his subject; and the question which, from first to last, he has to ask himself is, "How will this affect the architecture? Will this help to explain the architectural intention, or will it possibly confuse and obscure it?" That is the important issue. He can aid the architecture and add to its charm; or he can annihilate its charm altogether. I am assuming in both cases that his colours are harmonious; for though it is true enough that he cannot charm if his colours do not harmonise, it is unfortunately equally true that he can *destroy* even with harmonious colour.

Among the many beautiful and instructive examples bequeathed to us by great painters, it will be found that the decorative value is not always in direct proportion to the fame of the artist, nor even to the artistic power and skill displayed in them. It is unfortunately but too true that, with the increase of knowledge and artistic skill in pictorial work, the decorative sense diminished; and that the efforts of the painter became more and more concentrated on the artistic excellence and pictorial quality of the individual parts of his work, rather than on the ultimate value of the whole to the building. We must not on that account underrate the works themselves; nor, in drawing comparisons, need we refuse admiration to that which does not fulfil all our requirements. But we must guard against being misled into assuming that the treat-

ment adopted by a painter of superlative genius is, on that account, the best for us to attempt ; or even that it is the best, *as a treatment*, that he could have adopted. Let us rather carefully select and note those merits which we can perceive to be instructive, for our purposes, noting also in what it seems to fail ; remembering that human talent and human judgment, even at their highest, are but limited ; and that the very genius that leads a man to break through tradition and limitation not infrequently carries him over the boundary of good judgment. He felt the galling of the yoke without realising that the yoke itself had a useful purpose to fulfil. So, on the other hand, we shall find more frequent decorative suggestions, and a clearer decorative instinct, when painting was less perfect, but more content to be the handmaid of architecture, accepting frankly as the painter did the limitations of the position.

But decorative art, like any other art, if it is to have any life in it, cannot altogether depend on previous example. The artist in any walk of art must revert, from time to time, to Nature. Needless to say, Nature teems with suggestion and information if you only know what to ask of her, and how to ask it. Her very profusion is a difficulty, and we have, in a way, to learn her language.

In the beginning, it is easier and more instructive to learn from what other men have done ; for they have by the experience of many generations already sorted out and made ready for us many of Nature's facts ; have as it were prepared a grammar and translation. But the time comes when he who would know more must go to the original. And it is easier to understand the original tongue if you have well studied the translation and the grammar.

There is one other study not to be forgotten. We allow that decoration is but a servant to architecture. Surely the decorator can ill fulfil his part without at least so much study of architecture as may give him some grasp of its meaning and motives. Without that he will hardly perceive what should be his own. He must sympathise with the architect, or he will fail to help him.

CHAPTER II

THE DISTRIBUTION OF VALUES

THE decorator who is called upon to deal with an interior which has any pretension to architectural effect—that is to say, which presents features of a structural character, or suggestive of structure—has first to arrive at a decision, in his own mind, as to which of those features are important to the architectural result; which, that is, help to express its form, its proportion and its stability; whatever his ultimate scheme of colour, the distinction and the connection of these must never be lost sight of. Any lapse in this respect tends to confusion, must produce some weakness and may prove disastrous ; the problem of how to secure the immediate recognition of the features which express structure is one which is best dealt with at first quite independently of any particular hues, unless there be already some permanent colour in the structure, such as coloured marble ; but even where such permanent features exist in colour, we must assume that they have been introduced as part of a decorative scheme, and the whole must be considered, in the first instance, on the basis of the " Distribution of Values," precisely as a painter would plot out his picture in light and shade, and determine where his principal contrasts must be effected.

In the expression of architectural form it is the *strength* and *value* of the colour to be used that are important to the *expression*, not the particular hue ; the latter being a question of harmony, to be considered later.—Indeed, it may often happen that the same feature, repeated, may be best treated alternately by a second hue, but the value must be identical throughout, if, in each case, the function be the same. Take an example : The earlier Italian painters, when painting some subject in the vaulted roof of a building, would assist the rib of the vaulting by a clearly defined border, divided usually into long and short panels containing ornament on coloured grounds (*see* Plate IIA). These grounds would generally be of alternate colourings—perhaps dull red in one, indigo blue in the next—but the " Values " would be the same ; the effect of the border being to ensure the recognition of the form and structure of the vaulting, from which otherwise the spectator's eye would have been diverted by the pictorial subject.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF VALUES

The actual colours used in the borders would have to be in pleasant harmony with those in the subject and its ground, but their "value" must be such as to effectually frame the picture and support the rib. The value of the whole border would be dependent partly on its width, partly on the precision and strength of its contrasts; and the former must be decided before the picture can be designed.

The use of equivalent values of two different hues, alternately or otherwise, for the same features of a decorative scheme, was largely resorted to by the decorative colourists of mediæval times, as well as by those of the Renaissance, and deserves careful study as a valuable colour artifice. But to come back to the "Distribution of Values"—in the expression of architectural form. It will perhaps make the matter clearer to illustrate it.

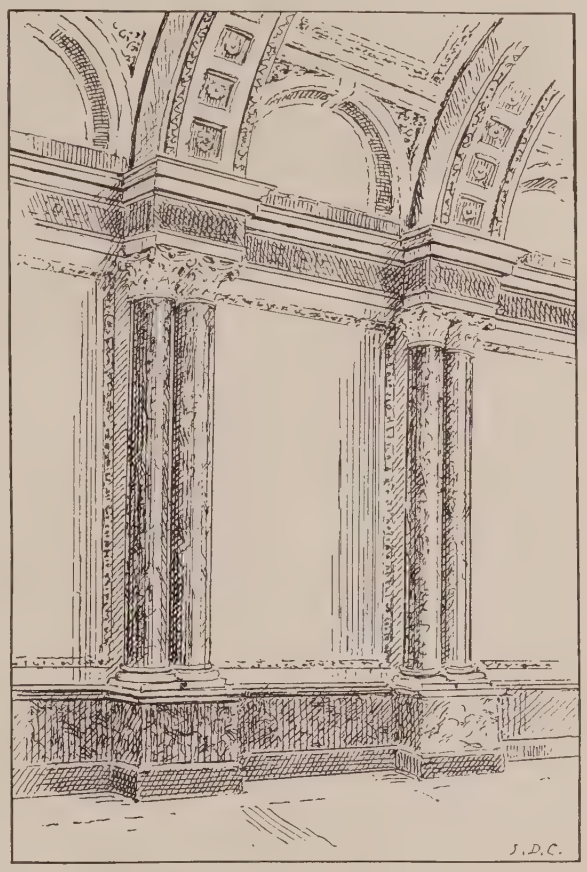

Fig. 1.

Assume that we have a large hall divided into bays by side columns, the arched roof being correspondingly divided (Fig. 1). In this case say that the columns are of dark-coloured marble, with capitals and bases of white marble and standing on a dark plinth.

Without going into the question of particular colours, let us see how we should distribute our light and dark tones so that the eye will readily take in the structural forms.

Having, here, two important structural features dark, we must see that the remaining structural features are sufficiently defined by some equivalent value of colour to encourage the eye to follow the complete structural form. To begin with the entablature. Were this all dark, the horizontal mass would overpower the vertical supports, which, besides having a less diameter, are lightened by vertical high-lights on the rounded and polished surface. It will be sufficient then, to decide that the frieze shall be dark, of a value equivalent to that of the columns.

We now come to the arched roof, divided into bays by arched bands or ribs. It is important that in these the arched structures, as connected with the colouring, should be immediately recognised ; therefore with more or less vigour, according to the size of the building and the scale of its details, these arched ribs must be defined also by an equivalent value of dark colour ; and this must be so nearly continuous as to carry the eye unhesitatingly along the arched form. We have now got the main skeleton, or bones of the structure, fairly made clear ; and whilst we yet require to fill up a few intervals, and to give some interest to the intervening spaces, we must guard against so dealing with them as to disturb the continuity of the structural values, which need to retain their leading importance, whatever elaboration be added elsewhere. To secure this it is only necessary, so far as the colouring is concerned, to take care that in these subordinate surfaces the values and contrasts are lessened, either by diminished vigour in the hues, or by a marked reduction in their breadth ; for obviously a narrow line has less force than a broad line, though it be of the same actual colour-value ; only, observe, that to keep the whole together, and the parts in due relation to each other, the contrast between structure on the one hand and space or surface on the other must not be excessive. Indeed, as a rule, it is desirable to carry through the spaces a little of the same colour which has been used to define the main structure : using it to define or suggest the subordinate structural arrangement which such surfaces will either possess or require. But, as stated above, we have still a few intervals to fill up. Perhaps the most important of these occurs, in this example, between the shaft of the column, which is dark, and the frieze, to which we have already given a corresponding value. This interval is represented by the capital (or white marble) and the architrave. Together these would make too big a break in the continuity, although the varied shadows in the carving of the capital are helpful. If the walls between the columns are left of a light tint, which would sharply isolate the columns, some margin or band of a darker colour will be needed to frame the panel and express the surface. As such a marginal border would include the wall up to the architrave, it will serve to guide the eye past the white capital, and so leave no break but such as the eye will readily pass by. If, however, the wall surface—though lighter than the columns—have a depth of colour sufficient to prevent marked isolation of the latter, their contrast with the white capitals will carry the eye upward, and the panel margin is no longer essential (Fig. 2).

Now, in the above example, the main structure has been defined by the aid of dark tones. It must not be inferred that these are in every case essential. The structural forms may all be light, colour being confined to the spaces. Or again, the artist may rely on gilding to define the structure, a service which it performs

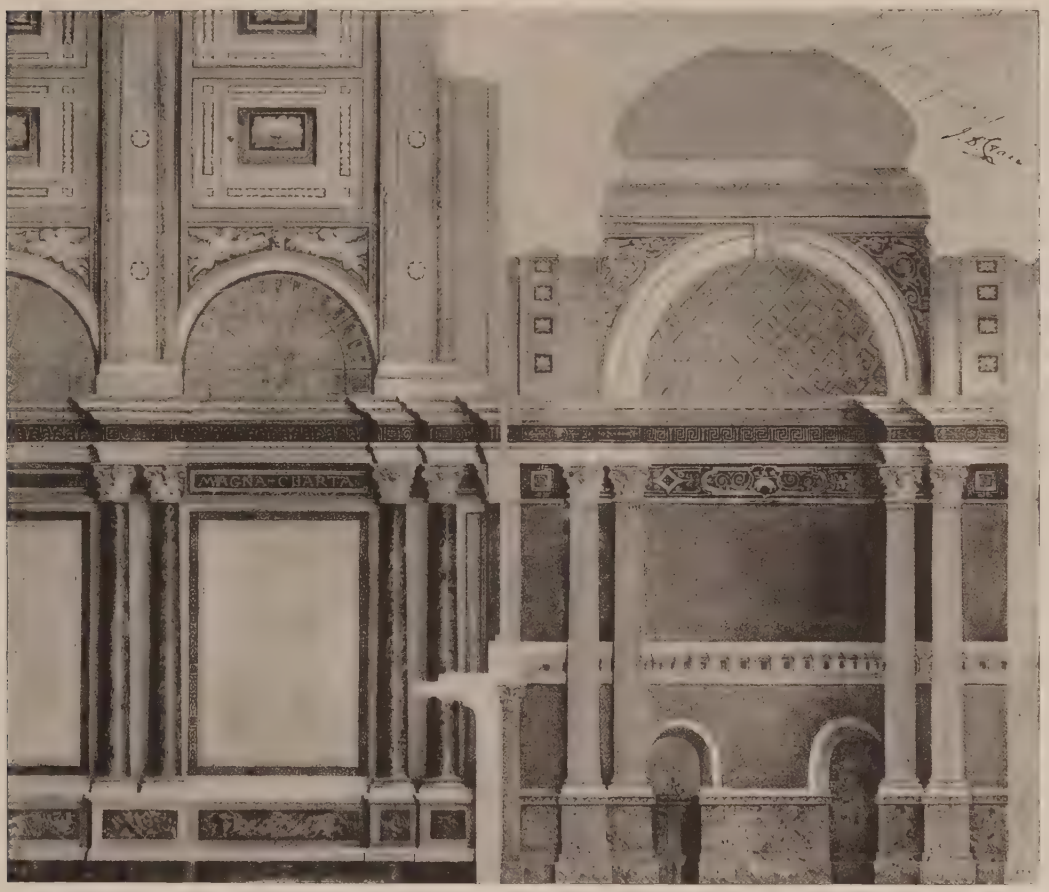

Fig. 2. VICTORIA HALL, LEEDS, WITH ENTRANCE VESTIBULE [*J. D. Crace*

admirably if only used boldly ; but timid gilding, in thin lines or scattered, weakens and impoverishes all attempt at expression. As to the way in which these structural values should be applied in detail, that is, what forms they should take, or what features of detail they should lay hold of, we may very well leave this to be considered when we are dealing with the scheme of colour. For the moment let us get well into our minds that what affects the form, proportion, and repose of a decorated interior, even more than does harmony of colour, is the distribution of the *colour values*.

All that has been said about the vaulted roof is equally true of the horizontal ceiling, but a few separate points arise for consideration. First, there is to be dealt with the tendency of horizontal ceilings to appear to "sag" or dip in the centre. This fact has to be reckoned with in the decoration, all the more so if it has not been considered in the disposition of any relief ornament or mouldings by which it may

already be broken up. If it be panelled geometrically, as into squares or into other simple repeated forms, the tendency is diminished because this suggestion of structure reassures the eye, and it is only necessary to be certain that the subdivision is distinct, and that any colouring used does not confuse the structure. But where the surface is without moulded relief, or where the decorator is free to set out the ceiling, whether with or without mouldings, in other than repeat divisions, let him keep in mind this tendency to sag. The surest antidote is to throw the weight of colour-value into the angles of the ceiling, taking care not to leave them detached, and generally to keep a little more power towards the cornice. This by no means requires any weakness of colour elsewhere ; but if firm colouring be used towards the centre it must be with less breadth. Much also may be done by the direction given to the mouldings or main lines of colour—to the setting out, in fact. But this will be more properly dealt with later (*see* p. 28).

When we come to the cornice and walls the same method will be found to apply. In the cornice a study of the section will enable the artist to decide where to place his strongest colour, which must be where it *will not destroy the section* nor the detail of the enrichments, and where at the same time it will form a sort of stepping-stone from the "value" of the frieze to that of the constructive lines of the ceiling. This ensures that binding together of the structural features—that natural growth from one part to another—which secures a sense of unity and repose in the whole.

For it must be remembered that whereas it frequently happens that parts, at least, of an interior are imperfectly lit, so that the actual hue cannot with certainty be distinguished, the "value" or weight of colour is always apparent, even in a very imperfect light. Consequently, although some want of harmony in the colours themselves may escape attention, the confusion and unrest produced by misplaced *values* are but too evident in any light.

So far as the writer's observation goes, the failures in important schemes of Colour Decoration are far more often attributable to neglect of this simple fact than to any other cause. Carefully balanced harmonies and artistic excellence of detail may in themselves excite interest or admiration, but the *building* has not been beautified ; and the whole duty and purpose of "decoration" is to beautify. The first element of beauty in a building should be repose. Any treatment which disturbs repose is not a gain, but a loss. The quality of repose is dependent on an immediate recognition of well-balanced structure, that is, "Stability" ; and any system of colouring which disturbs the recognition of structure is harmful to the dignity of the whole.

CHAPTER III

THE SCHEME OF COLOUR

WHEN once the Decorator is fairly clear in his mind what he wants to express, he is confronted by the question—By what treatment? Shall the prevalent tones be warm or cool—bright or subdued? With firm, distinct contrasts, or in delicate tints?

Fortunately—or at times unfortunately—some, at least, of these questions will often be decided for us by surrounding circumstances, and the first thing to be done is to ascertain whether such controlling circumstances exist, and what they are.

The aspect of a room, the source of light, and its amount; the purpose, and whether most used by day or by night, the proportion of height, breadth and length, these things, and many others, go to influence the choice of a colour-scheme. And, besides all these, it will often happen that there already exists some coloured feature or adjunct which has perforce to be accepted, and which may be helpful or very much the reverse.

Moreover, although not very directly affecting the choice of a scheme in itself, there is another question which will be found in practice to have a marked influence on the treatment. Is the interior under consideration a room which will have draperies, carpets, and furniture, all representing more or less important masses of colour in themselves; or is it some public room or hall, in which such supplemental means of colour will be nearly or altogether wanting? It will be obvious, even to those who have not made colour a study, that where there are no draperies to the windows to supply full tones of colour, assisted by the shadows of the folds, a fuller and more complete scheme will be required in the painted decorations.

This is, however, often overlooked by those to whom it should be a consideration of course; and a room is allowed to look cold or bare for "want of curtains," for which curtains were never contemplated.

But there is another point in the arrangement of the colour-scheme which has in every case to be borne in mind; and which presents, indeed, the great difficulty in decoration; more particularly to those artists whose practice and experience lie in the

painting of detached pictures. In a picture the "local colours" are always subject to the modulation of light and shade. This enables the painter to bring together and harmonise objects of which the "local colour," if flat and unvaried, would be quite irreconcilable; whereas in decoration, we have to deal almost entirely with flat local colour. Such light and shade as they get our colours receive under circumstances beyond our control; and the most we can do is to avail ourselves of the circumstances in placing our colours. This is a very different thing from bringing together the colours of painted draperies, in which probably no two contiguous square inches present absolutely the same tone or tint to the eye. The whole surface of the drapery in a picture is broken up into lights, shades, shadows, reflected lights, and top lights; and, this being the case, the original local colour, as it would appear on a flat surface, hardly appears at all. Under these conditions the painter can group together in agreeable harmony a far wider selection of colours than are possible to the decorator. He can, by slight modulations of the lighting, produce considerable deviations in the relative power of the several colours; so that, where they adjoin, the colours on the canvas are entirely different from the local colours represented.

Not so the decorator, in whose work each colour has to stand for what it is worth, to be brought against its neighbour often on the same surface and without any shadings or heightenings. Adjustments and tonings cannot be effected by a "glazing" just where it seems wanted, but by the careful introduction of other defined tints in definite forms contrived for that definite purpose. It is this necessity for dealing with colour "*in the flat*" that so baffles the artist who has always dealt with it "in the round"; and until he has found out what a different art it is, he will not fail to make strange and startling blunders. For the painter goes to work with all the confidence of one who knows, yet is confronted by conditions which he has never had occasion to consider. The chances are that he comes to grief more completely than the cautious tyro, so long as he relies on "gilt frame" experience.

The decorator has to start by forming a general scheme—that is to say, by deciding what hues are to be used in the larger fields, such as ceiling, walls, and woodwork; and it is generally the walls which will have to engage his first attention. So many conditions affect the question of the wall colour that these must be thoroughly considered first, at any rate when the walls present large surfaces in proportion to the whole space. Will they be hung with pictures, and, if so, with many or few? Many pictures on a wall involve shadows from many frames, and your colour must allow for these shadows. Thus, assuming that you decide on a red ground, the red, for pictures hung near together, needs to be brighter in tone than where large surfaces are to remain uncovered. The shadows will "tone down" the ground.

THE SCHEME OF COLOUR

Will the room be seen most by day or by night? If the latter, it is desirable to avoid colours which tend towards the blue or violet end of the scale. A red which by daylight might appear crimson in tone may, by artificial light, appear heavy and absorbent. Colour which is to be seen by night needs always to be purer than is required for daylight. Not only this; it must tend a little more towards the yellow end of the scale. Thus, tints made with ordinary ultramarine blue show a very pure blue by day, but by night seem grey, with a tendency to violet. A blue that is to appear blue by artificial light must incline rather to the turquoise tone; and, in using ultramarine as the staining pigment, the addition of a little pure yellow, such as chrome, will be found necessary to recover the lighting power.

In decorative work of a very ordinary kind, as that of the average residence, a few simple rules may usefully be borne in mind, although they need not be slavishly adhered to in every case. To begin with, beware of large contrasting masses of plain colour. If your walls are of a single colour it is rarely wise to have your draperies of a single hue also, however carefully harmonised. In a small room there should be no abrupt contrasts, whether in hue or in value, and it is often better to select the colours for the various larger features from proximate parts of the scale, using the contrasts only in small quantities for definition or accentuation. Contrast in the floor is more admissible; it is, as a rule, more broken up by furniture; and in every case is less before the eye.

Consideration of these points will, with practice, become instinctive; but to those who seldom, or only at intervals, have occasion to deal with decorative colour, they need careful study. It is especially necessary to point them out to architects; for although their training will lead them at once to appreciate the matter *when pointed out*, architects are among those most easily led away by colour-schemes attractive in themselves, and where suitably used, but ill-adapted for the purpose which they may, at the time, have in view.

Having, however, decided upon some general scheme of colour, that is to say, on the hues and tones for the principal masses and lines, and what we may call "general effect" as to depth and lighting, there follow three or four processes of arrangement. There is first the *setting out* of the whole in detail by which the connection of the various features is to be made complete, and their relative proportion and value to be ensured. Following on this and in aid of it are three matters needful to the success of the work, and it is in these that the true artist will be distinguished. They are (1) the modulation of colour; (2) the recalls of colour; and (3) the accentuation of colour.

Let us take them in order. The modulation of colour may be in the direction of

making it darker or lighter, but I now more particularly imply such a modification of its initial tone or richness as shall bring it into harmonious relation with its surroundings without losing its quality or value. It will often happen that whilst a certain purity or richness of colour is demanded by the adjoining work, this purity, if left undisturbed, in certain features would prove too cutting—would appear too prominent for its purpose, whilst to seriously degrade its tone or colour would make it appear dirty and out of scale. It is then that modulation may be effected, not by altering the colour itself, but by placing upon it another colour, or even a lighter or darker shade of the same colour in small quantity. In a panel a small marginal line or a narrow border will often do all that is necessary : in other cases, the ornamentation upon it will so modify the apparent colour as to satisfy the requirement whilst maintaining the key. Thus a delicate ornament in white on a blue ground makes the effect of blue both lighter and "greyer"; or a fine black line on a red ground will make the decorative effect of the red darker and a little duller, but in neither case will the original key of the red or blue be lost. A very beautiful effect was often obtained by the Italian masters by using a fine interlaced pattern of gold on their coloured borders (*see* Plates XI–XVII). The gold was only noticeable here and there, but the border was blended to the surrounding work without sacrificing vigour or purity of tone.

Gold surfaces may, in the same way, be toned by superimposed lines or ornament so as to prevent its strong reflections from overpowering the adjoining colours (*see* Plates IV–V).

The *Recall* of colour is one of the indispensable features of the art of producing an harmonious whole, whether in picture or decoration. Whatever colour has been used in quantity in one part of a picture or a room, that colour must have some "echo" or reminiscence of it introduced in other parts, or it will remain harsh and detached as contrast, and the whole will be wanting in melodious quality. Thus when curtains are used, though of a colour pleasantly enough contrasted with the walls in point of hue, their effect will be harsh and isolated unless some of the same colour be carried, even in small quantity, through other parts of the decoration. This should never be lost sight of. It is at the very root of harmonising result.

"*Accentuation*" is to colouring what emphasis is to speech. Without it all remains tame and monotonous ; but a very little excess of it is fatiguing and vexatious. Just as the good speaker reserves his emphasis for the points which he deems most important, so should the colourist act. It is of supreme importance to the whole that only where it will assist the eye to recognise material features or to follow structural lines should accentuation be given, and then discreetly. A point or a line of colour, rather

brighter in key than elsewhere ; a touch of bright colour or of black, some simple device in black and white—these used with judgment will give animation to the whole, and help to subordinate what before seemed too noticeable. For the essence of success is to maintain the due relation of each part to the whole, a relation founded on *sympathy with the architectural motive*.

It is in the observance of these general principles alone that Architecture can derive real and splendid help from colour. Nor can any architecture be really complete without the aid of colour. We have but to look round to see that colour is an inseparable part of the Cosmos. Nature will not tolerate monochrome, but whenever a blank is left sets to work to remedy the defect. Does a rock slide from its place, Nature's chemistry soon tints the scar, and her care clothes the rock itself with lichens and ivy. Even where man leaves his bare stone and brick, hard and blank in the daylight, Nature, when she has a chance, takes pity, and soon tones the naked surface to the landscape. But within the building Nature can work but very slowly. There we must fend for ourselves. If we have so studied the matter as to know what is the ultimate beauty we want, and why we want it, we have, in colour, a handmaiden to Architecture capable of most graceful service. But it must be intelligent and watchful service rendered with a knowledge of the master-art's requirements, not the attendance of a half-taught slattern. Above all, it must be a service of complete sympathy with all that is best and noblest in that which she serves.

CHAPTER IV

EXPLANATION OF SURFACE AND CONTOUR

WE have already dealt with the expression of structure in its more evident features, by the arrangement of the colour values. But it is not in these only that some explanation is demanded when colour is used. Having before touched on the subject of explaining "surface" (*see* p. 6), it is necessary to elucidate the matter a little more fully.

Whilst the first requirement is to secure the prompt impression of stability by assisting the eye to follow the main lines of structure, as provided by the architect, there will remain sometimes considerable fields of surface which, in diffused light, will not sufficiently account for themselves in their relation to the structural whole.

Let us consider, for instance, the vaulted roof of a great church. If the vaulting be complex, so that the ribs of the groining form a fairly close network, as seen from below, the spaces between them will nowhere be extensive enough to break the continuity of impression ; there will, in fact, not anywhere be sufficient blank space to detain the eye when led by the moulded ribs which so completely explain the whole. The decoration of these spaces therefore becomes unimportant, and merely a question either of adding richness of detail, if that be wanted, or of modulating the ground colour. Their ornamentation is in no way important to the structural effect.

But it is far otherwise where the vaulting is simple and the ribs few and far apart. As they radiate from the springing, and diverge more and more, so the widening space between them seems to grow structurally weaker, and less to have any functional value. Its very form and contour become doubtful if absolutely unbroken by any line. Even the most untrained eye will recognise the immense value of the visible joints in such a vaulting, for they go to explain the natural support of the ribs and of the vaults beneath them. But these straight masonry joints do more than this—they

at once make clear the *contour* of the surface. And this result brings us to a very important decorative axiom.

"THE EXACT CONTOUR OF CURVED SURFACES CAN ONLY BE MANIFESTED BY *STRAIGHT LINES* USED IN THE DIRECTION OF THE CURVE"*

The truth of this axiom is easily tested by experiment, as can also its converse, that no line which is not a straight line (in the same sense) can give the required information.

Let us take the case of a brick wall which has bulged a few inches in the centre. If it has been plastered, and all joints thereby concealed, then, in a diffused light, and apart from what the top edge may betray, you can hardly ascertain at a little distance whether the wall be bulged or not.

But suppose that it is not plastered, and that the joints of the courses are visible : then every horizontal joint above or below the sight-line will explain the horizontal contour of the bulge ; and if there be a vertical joint of any length, or if a vertical chalk-line be drawn on its surface, then from any position right or left of that line the vertical contour is clearly revealed.

It is this fact which makes the use of the vertical line or division so necessary to the interior of the dome. The subject of the coloured treatment of the dome has, from time to time, been frequently discussed by architects and painters in connection with the subject of the decoration of St. Paul's ; but it is a curious illustration of the want of study of any principles of cause and effect in relation to the use of colour in architecture, that this use of vertical division, as an indispensable means of explaining the upward contour of the dome itself, has hardly, if at all, been noticed. In the case of this particular dome there are reasons more cogent still for the vertical division, which I will touch on directly, for they are reasons which apply to very many other domes ; but there is no other way so simple or so efficacious for securing the prompt recognition of the structural value of the vertical contour in any dome, and it is this promptitude of expression which constitutes its indispensable quality where pictorial art is to have any place in the decorative scheme. It cannot be too often repeated that, in architecture, the instinct which demands stability—*i.e.*, structural expression—must be satisfied before the spectator's mind is in a condition to derive coherent delight from any decorative beauty; therefore the pictorial decoration which floats in undefined space, upon a surface of unknown contour, is seen under conditions which

* The word "straight" is here used in the decorative sense, for although straight in one direction, such lines of course follow the contour in another.

keep the mind restless and vaguely dissatisfied. The "structure" has been merged in the "decoration."

Now let us see what are the more cogent reasons to which I have alluded for the use of the vertical division in the interior of the Dome of St. Paul's. This dome, like the majority of those of any size built after the middle of the Sixteenth Century, is not a complete, closed-in cupola. It not only has a large opening at the top, but a very massive superimposed structure, quite visible, and indeed very obvious, to anyone regarding the dome from within, at any distance compatible with the appreciation of pictorial decoration of its surface. This superstructure, as visible from within, has eight piers with openings between them, the piers corresponding to the piers in the drum below. Try to imagine the effect *on the sense of structure* if the intervening space were treated in colour without vertical division. Yet this has again and again been advocated by architects and others in discussing the decoration of St. Paul's, who, forgetting the expression of the building, allowed their minds to be occupied by systems of hagiology or ideal conceptions of space.

No part of a building of any dignity can be treated as space—structure—noble structure—must throughout be dominant.*

Whilst, however, the straight vertical division is the one which most completely and directly explains the contour of a dome, and is, from that fact, and from its simplicity, the only one which lends itself to pictorial treatment on any large scale, there are other ways of so treating these surfaces as to assist the recognition of their form. But these involve a much closer subdivision, and are not compatible with any important use of the higher forms of art, for they involve a repetition of geometrical forms in sufficient frequency to explain the form by their gradually diminishing scale. Examples of their method may be seen in Italian work, either by the subdivision into

* I shall perhaps be pardoned for reprinting from the *Journal of Proceedings of the Royal Institute of British Architects*, of December, 1884, my note at the conclusion of a discussion on this subject. I then said :

"Those who speak of the cupola of St. Paul's as representing the 'unbroken vault of heaven,' and therefore, a suitable field for the display of all the Heavenly Host (arranged in strata, like geological deposits), apparently forget that this particular vault has an opening at the top through which are seen the very material details of a mundane superstructure pierced with eight windows, the piers between which correspond with the eight piers in the drum below. The relation of the piers below to those above the aperture is recognised in Thornhill's paintings, who at any rate felt that it would not do to leave a solid stone superstructure floating, unsupported, in heavenly space ; for he adopted the vertical treatment, though in his own way. And, as such an indication of support, some form of vertical rib is indispensable. I say that Thornhill felt this ; but why do we not all admit that Thornhill did it *with Wren's knowledge*, and probably by Wren's advice ? Thornhill knew Wren well, was long engaged upon his work at Greenwich, and was forty-seven years old when Wren, whom he only outlived eleven years, died. Is it reasonable to assume that Thornhill knew nothing of Wren's wishes or opinions about the painting of the cupola of St. Paul's ? If anything is clear it is that Wren provided for eight vertical divisions."

square coffer panels (Plate 11 B), or where small cupolas are sometimes divided by oblique lines forming lozenge-shaped panels, which gradually diminish upwards; or again in some of the beautiful Arabic cupolas in which elegant diaper patterns are combined with geometrical forms, and by similar means perform the same function. It will be obvious, however, that while this is a graceful substitute for a forbidden form of art, its very complexity prohibits its combination with any serious or noble use of the figure. It is quite true that during the decadent period of the Byzantine Empire some important domes, such as that of St. Sophia, were decorated with great single figures without the vertical line of division; but, however successful in attaining an effect of splendour these may have been, the form of the dome was impaired; and, whilst omitting the true division, the artist had so much instinct for the requirement that he arranged his elongated single figures as if to serve the same purpose; with the result that the figures themselves appear distorted by the curve; or, at least, all except that one which happens to confront the spectator. During the same period, however, the value of the vertical division of the dome was recognised, even in the splendour of mosaic, as may be seen at San Vitale, Ravenna. Yet this was an age when splendour was the ideal; taste, as influenced by refined perception of form and proportion, was decadent.

Before we leave the subject of domes, I should like to point out that the apsidal half-dome stands on a quite different footing, decoratively. In the first place, its contour is obvious, since its outer edge explains it. Not only, therefore, does it not require any vertical line of division, but a more or less horizontal treatment may often seem fitting enough. A half-dome cannot even be constructed like a dome; for what is to take the thrust, if it be built in voussoirs? It is, in fact, an enlarged niche, and any considerable accentuation of the vertical element would suggest an impossible method of structure. Such expression must be limited by the possibility of suggesting its control at the external boundary of the recess.

It may be well here to point out that what makes the straight line so valuable in explaining the contour which we want to express, makes it also a danger where unintentional curves of surface exist. On a sagging or uneven ceiling, or on a bulged wall, straight lines of any length must be most carefully avoided, because they betray imperfections which it must often be the colourist's function to conceal. Therefore, when confronted with such imperfections, his ornamentation must be so contrived that lines of any length or importance must be curved or broken.

CHAPTER V

TREATMENT BY GREAT MASTERS

IT will be useful to show how the painters of different epochs, or of different Schools, met the various problems which surface decoration set before them. They are always the same problems; differing perhaps in extent, or in detail, but the same in principle. To express, or at least to support, the constructive idea, to ally the painting with the structure; to maintain the recognition of the surface form, where that form was essential to stability; to emphasise where attention seemed desirable, and to harmonise the parts, with the larger harmony of the whole always in view—these may vary in kind or in degree, but they were and are the invariable requirements of decoration.

We may pass by the antique—Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek, or Roman—because this is not a History of the Art, and because the examples which exist are too fragmentary for our purpose. The Græco-Roman work at Pompeii, a second-rate watering-place at the time of Rome's lavish magnificence, at least suffices to show how general was the use of colour and coloured ornament, and how considerable were the knowledge and skill available at a seaside resort, perhaps equivalent, at that time, to our Hastings or Scarborough.

But for our purpose it is better to take buildings which can be seen in their entirety, and in which the motive of the artist in relation to the building can be fairly gauged. With this object in view, we may take first the mosaic decorations which have come down to us, because many of these are fairly complete, and because they for a long time continued to exercise a strong influence on the painted decorations which succeeded them.

We must, however, remember that the earlier examples of these mosaics belong to a period of some five or six centuries of the dark ages of art, a period in which the sense of refinement and proportion in art was practically dead, and in which a barbaric splendour, a semi-oriental magnificence was the aim of the patron at least, to which the artist was bound to conform.

In spite of this we can see that the men who executed these splendid works were

not deficient in some strong artistic instincts. Much was, no doubt, due to tradition, much to rules gradually developed by experience; but no one will deny that the mosaic artists from the time of Justinian down even to the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, understood how to use their material effectively.

They seem early to have recognised that mouldings were ineffective with large surfaces of gold ground, and they substituted borders in strong colouring and distinct pattern. Also that curved rather than flat surfaces were more favourable to such grounds could not fail to be recognised. But in matters of detail they found how to overcome difficulties of effect. Such a difficulty was present in the tendency of gold ground to silhouette, as one dark mass, any coloured form upon it. Figures, though draped in rich colouring, appeared uniformly black when the gold reflected light. It was to correct this that gold was introduced, not only in the borders and accessories, but into the lines of the drapery itself. The flat walls were divided by horizontal and perpendicular bands of well-defined colour; and the structural features, such as arches and window openings, had soffits of rich colouring and margins of clearly expressed contrast. In many of the earlier domes the value of the vertical division is inadequately recognised, and is but partly effected—and that unsatisfactorily—by the upright, elongated figures of saints represented thereon. But there are exceptions, as for instance, at San Vitale (sixth century), where the gold ground, richly ornamented with coloured foliage and birds, is divided into four by the same number of tapering bands, with lilies on a purple ground. These bands meet in a circular panel in which the *Agnus Dei* appears on a blue ground sprinkled with stars. The four large segments of the dome are each further divided vertically by the figure of an angel, white-robed, standing erect on an azure globe. A firm black margin emphasises the main divisions. The whole arrangement shows a true understanding of the real decorative function of colour. The contour is explained, constructive lines suggested.

It must be admitted, however, that the mosaicists, as a rule, attended little to grace or proportion, especially between the eighth and twelfth centuries, when these qualities were not to be found in any branch of art. They relied evidently—and not without justification—on the splendour of effect of these great fields of golden surface, with its changeful and mysterious lights and shades, its glowing colour and impressive figures. The spectator entered a vaporous atmosphere rather than a building, so that the mind was diverted from the very idea of structure.

With the gradual revival of painting and the more careful study of form and composition—not yet of light and shade—the artist entrusted with the decoration of a building, and no longer having the glamour of gold to rely on, quickly realised that his own work must supplement that of the architect—that he had, in fact, to consider

the total result. He worked in pure, strong tones of colour, and these would soon disturb the lines of the building if care for the latter were not exercised. It is certain, too, that some attention was paid to the advantage of assisting form by colour in the eleventh and twelfth centuries; for, in such buildings as the Florence Baptistery, or

Fig. 3. CAPELLA DEI SPAGNUOLI, SANTA MARIA NOVELLA, FLORENCE (*Giotto*)

the neighbouring Church of San Miniato, in which black and white marbles were employed, these are clearly used to that end. With the waning of the thirteenth and the dawn of the fourteenth century came Giotto and a number of contemporaries and followers, much of whose work is still with us, and can be considered in its aims and methods side by side with that of later and more fully equipped painters.

The buildings with which Giotto and the painters of his school had to deal were for the most part "Gothic" in character: that is to say, they had vaulted roofs with

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dividing ribs, very simple in arrangement. A quadri-partite vault—their usual form—leaves very large spaces between these main ribs; and such spaces, where they widen, tend to look weak and non-supported (*see* page 14).

We find the Giottesque painters well aware of this, and ready to deal with the difficulty. Their first care is to insist on the eye following the rib; and this they do by making that the line of strongest contrast. Most usually they support it on either side by a sharply defined border, painted on the panel, but allied in colour to the rib, and in contrast to the ground of the vault. The result is that the eye is persuaded to recognise the constructive lines before it can examine the pictorial work in the larger spaces (Fig. 3).

Sometimes, when the vault has a higher pitch and the spaces are narrower, the same result is secured by the treatment of the rib alone. An instance of this may be seen in a chapel of the Palace of the Popes at Avignon.* The four spaces of the vault are painted blue with fine gold stars, and have a single figure in each space, which has no border, but a narrow red margin and a light cresting in gold. The rib of the section here shown (Fig. 4) has the large hollows, *b*, ornamented with a vertical leaf, green on a deep maroon ground, but the lower face, *a*, and the sides, *cc*, are in black and white, the strongest contrast possible; while the contiguous margins are in bright red with a simple gold lozenge ornament thereon. The black and white compels the eye to follow the line of the rib.

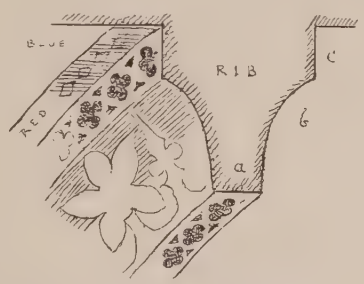

FIG. 4. VAULT OF CHAPEL, PALAIS DES PAPES, AVIGNON

In most of these vaultings the rib consists of one large simple member, in sections sometimes round, sometimes octagonal. If the latter it is usually panelled out in short lengths of contrasting colour within a white ground (*see* Plate IIA). In any case the painter keeps it well in evidence. The supporting border, too, takes various forms. Frequently that also is panelled out within a white margin, the colours in the panels being counter-changed (*see* Fig. 3); but sometimes, as at Assisi, it is a wide continuous band of foliage on a coloured ground, and it is interesting to note that here (in the upper church) the several bays of the vaulting itself are *alternate* in colour and treatment—one blue with stars, the next yellow with figures in large medallions. In this way not only was monotony of perspective avoided, but a more complete harmony with the walls assured.

It is noticeable that even Correggio and Pordenone, whose frescoes largely ignore

* Attributed to Simone Memmi.

true decorative principles, did, when dealing with similar vaulted roofs, avail themselves of the like means of supporting and reinforcing the constructive lines by borderings of which the colouring sustained that in the ribs or arches (Plate I (A)). When we come to the walls we find that the Giottesque painters were satisfied with horizontal and vertical bands or borders, which, while dividing their subjects, sufficiently expressed the plain surface and established a continuity of the colouring of the construction (Plate XVIII). But as soon as the art of painting advanced in the early Renaissance, these bands, often treated in imitation of mosaic, gave way to the representation of architectural features, such as pilasters, architraves, and friezes, which were frequently treated with much elaboration. These afforded an excellent means of suggesting strength and giving unity to the building and the paintings which adorned it.

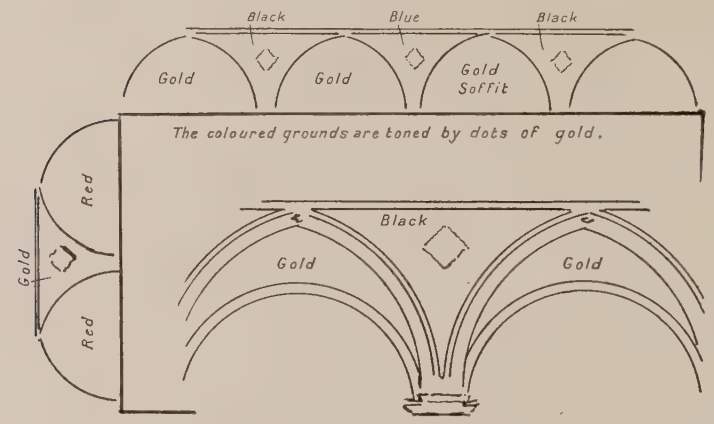

FIG. 5. SALA PICCOLOMINI, SIENA (*Pinturrichio*)
Arrangement of coloured grounds

The work of Pinturrichio may be cited, for he must be regarded as pre-eminently a painter whose decorative arrangement and colouring entitle him to a first place. The "Sala Piccolomini" at Siena would alone suffice to show that not only was he full of invention and design, but that he had a grasp and resource in the management of rich and brilliant colour which have never been surpassed. He had the true decorative instinct, which guided him, whilst lavishing his ingenuity on the parts, to make the *whole* his ultimate aim—the complete interior one picture.

The walls of the "Sala Piccolomini" (A.D. 1502–7), built perfectly plain, are thrown into a series of bays or panels by painted architectural features. The piers, which are represented as supporting the pendentives of the vaulting and the arches between them, consist of triple pilasters, in two of which a blue ground relieves the light ornament, while that in the centre has coloured ornament on gold ground. This blue and this gold form the connecting link of the constructive colouring, and are also largely used in the subjects which fill the intervals—the famous series of frescoes depicting the life of Æneas Silvia (Pius II.). The band of interlaced ornament which takes the place of a rib moulding in marking out the vaulting is coloured in red, blue, and gold on a black ground, and framed by white mouldings, a daringly strong combination to have ventured on in contiguity with pictorial work. But this master

PLATE I

(A) ST. GIOVANNI EVANGELISTA, PARMA

The vaulting of this church is entirely covered with fresco paintings. The drawing shows the springing of the arches, and exemplifies that expression of the main structural forms which is so essential a feature of decorative colouring.

The blue, which is thus used, occurs again in combination with other colour as a wide border on each side of the arch, effecting the required alliance between structure and painting.

(B) DECORATION OF THE DOME, S. VITTORE, MILAN

The white vertical and horizontal bands, with the gilt relief, which softens the white, serve, in the first place to explain the contour of the dome. Their secondary effect is to unite the separate panels, each with its picture, into one treatment, in which the colour pales gradually upwards as the proportion of white to the whole increases.

(B) DECORATION OF THE DOME, S. VITTORE, MILAN

(A) VAULTING, S. GIOVANNI EVANGELISTA, PARMA

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PLATE II

(B) LINING OF ARCHED RECESS IN CHAPEL, SALA DEL CAMBIO, PERUGIA

In this small arched soffit, originally quite plain, we have an example of structural suggestion in which the painted panels not only frame the picture in fresco which the arch includes, but extend the colouring of the picture, making it a part of the building—that is to say, truly decorative. Notice how the fine black ornament tones down the yellow.

(A) DECORATION OF RIB OF VAULTING, CAPELLA DEL SANTO CORPORALE, ORVIETO

This is a fairly typical example of the colour treatment of the dividing rib of a quadripartite vault. It exemplifies also the counter-changing of colours of the same value, and the use of imitation of mosaic to which the early decorators were prone, probably as affording an opportunity of using strong colour broken into small parts.

PLATE II

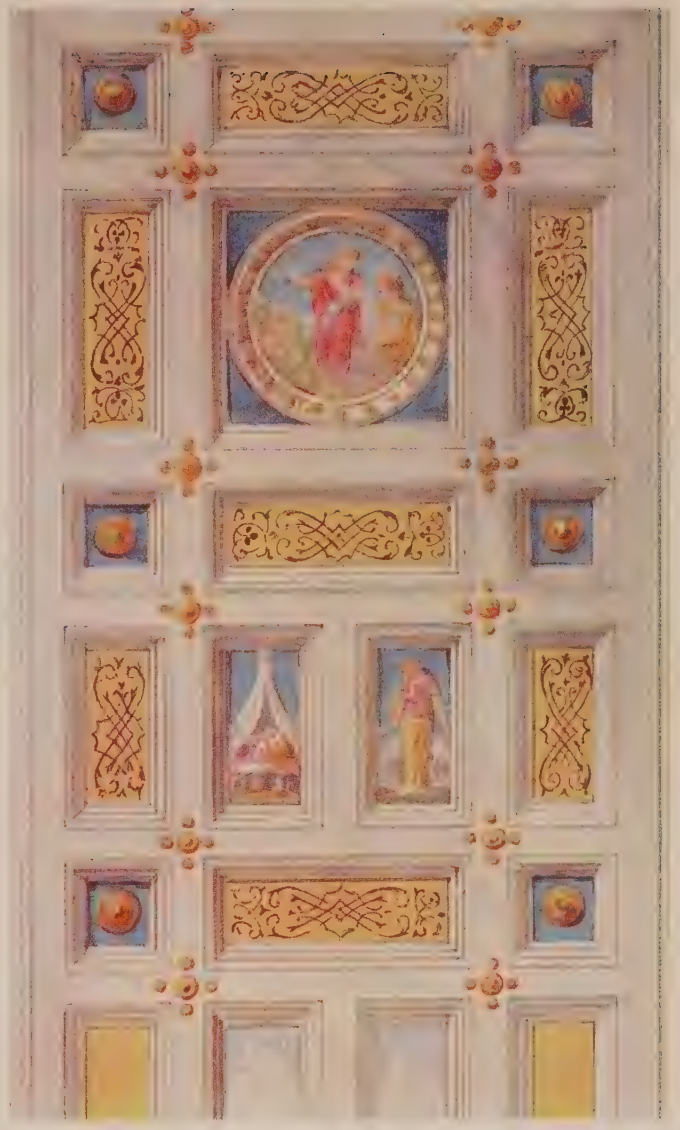
(B) LINING OF ARCHED RECESS IN CHAPEL, SALA DEL CAMBIO, PERUGIA

[illegible] arched soffit, originally quite plain, we have an example of structural suggestion [illegible] be pointed [illegible] colouring of the picture, making it a part of the building—that is to say, truly [illegible] Notice how the fine black ornament tones down the yellow.

[illegible] OF VAULTING, CAPELLA DEL [illegible] PORALE, ORVIETO

[illegible] ment of the dividing rib of a quadripartite [illegible] ing of colours of the same value, and the use of [illegible] prone, probably as affording an oppor-

(A) CAPELLA DEL SANTO
CORPORALE, ORVIETO



(B) LINING OF ARCHED RECESS IN CHAPEL,
SALA DEL CAMBIO, PERUGIA

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knew what he was doing, and had no fear for his pictures; they were a *part of the scheme*.

The distribution of the ground colours in the pendentives and soffits of the side vaulting is so bold and so remarkable as to call for special notice. The diagram (Fig. 5) will show that, on the *long* sides of the room, all the soffits over the lunettes have the grounds gilt, the pendentives being black, blue, and black successively; but at the *ends* of the room the gold ground is in the pendentive, the soffits here being of a strong red. The change is made with an object, intelligible when viewing the whole; the balance is well kept and the result delightful. The room is a masterpiece, of which many parts are also masterpieces in their thoughtful invention, their adjustment in the scheme, their triumphant harmony in a brilliant key of colour.*

All Pinturrichio's decorative work is worth careful study—there is always something to be learned from it. Well known examples are the Appartamenti Borgia in the Vatican, the Choir in Santa Maria del Popolo, Rome, and again in Santa Maria Maggiore at Spello, where his treatment of the vault is another instance of his power in handling bright colour.

The little chapel of the Sala di Cambio at Perugia (A.D. 1500) is a very instructive example of how the colourist may make or remedy proportion and even create form. The paintings are by Perugino or his pupils, but the "setting out" of the colour-scheme and some of the details suggest Pinturrichio's hand, in the bold independence with which the colours remodel the leading form, and that in tones, quite unlike Perugino's colouring in the adjoining room—though the latter was a fine colourist. The ceiling is, in actual form, a rather flat double vault with the arrises softened away. (*See* Fig. 6.) This, however, not only too much resembled that of the adjoining apartment, but did not lend itself to the arrangement of subjects which the artist desired to paint here. He therefore boldly marked out, by an enriched gilt moulding in low relief, a new form. This was done by following the arris from the middle pendentive for a time, then curving it so as to obtain a long centre panel, in the blue ground of which he painted the four Evangelists (Plate III). He further divided the remaining space by carrying the same gilt enrichment, parallel with the walls, from the four points, *b*, in the sides of

* Pinturrichio signed the contract for painting the walls and ceiling of the Piccolomini Library on June 29, 1502, with the condition that he should undertake no other work till it was finished. He began the work in the spring 1503. Owing to the death of his patron, the walls were not completed till 1507. In the designs for these pictures he was doubtless assisted by Raffaelle. The figure paintings are laid in in fresco and retouched "a secco."

It is characteristic of modern criticism that, throughout Crowe and Cavalcaselle's remarks on this work, the skill with which the *whole* is made beautiful, and the art with which the colouring of the whole is harmonised is entirely ignored and apparently unrecognised.

this centre panel, and again across the two ends, *c c* and *d d*. He thus obtained six oblong panels, in each of which he painted two half-length figures on a ground blue with gold stars. The eight three-sided panels next the large central division are treated with "arabesque" ornament on gold ground. But the four corner pendentive panels have similar ornament on a *bright red* ground dotted with gold. (*See* Plate III).

He decided thus to emphasise the outer angles. Why? Probably, in the first place, to express the full extent of the room, which is small; but, secondly, as a device for leading the eye away from inquiring too readily into the difference between the *actual* and the *apparent* lines of construction. Observe, too, how the gold dots on the red, and the gold stars on the blue, prevent harsh contrast.*

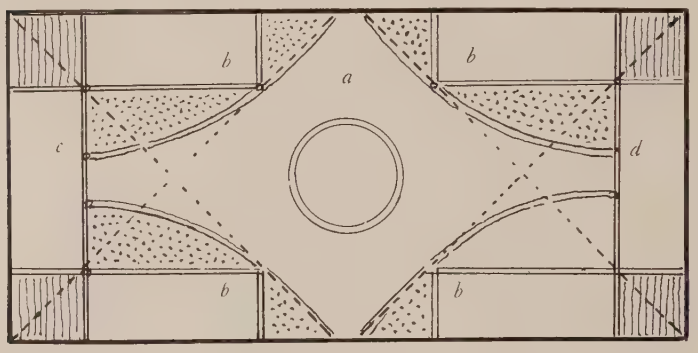

FIG. 6. VAULTED CEILING OF CHAPEL, SALA DI CAMBIO, PERUGIA

The same expedient of the use of a bright red to give emphasis in the angles of a vaulted ceiling occurs in the "Sala del Psyche" in the Palazzo del T. at Mantua (Plate IV). There it is somewhat differently applied in the two small square panels which flank the beautiful border of coloured ornament on a gold ground which divides the panels of the ceiling. It does this just above the springing of this border from the angle, and is used in the angles only.

If we take Pinturrichio's vaulted ceiling in Santa Maria del Popolo, at Rome, we again find colour of daring brilliancy, toned down by fine ornament in gold. The outer band, next the arches, has a continuous ornament of gold upon colour: red at each end, green, of equal value, for the centre third of the length. As at Perugia, the setting out of the low vault is not actually structural, but suggests structural

* Sala di Cambio, Perugia. The Audience Hall (adjoining the chapel) was inaugurated in 1453, without any pictorial decoration. The proposed subjects for the paintings were not submitted to Perugino until 1499. The work was completed in 1500. The treatment of the *hall* was, no doubt, Perugino's own. In that of the Chapel one must recognise another influence, with more originality and a brighter sense of colour. Inasmuch as Pinturrichio was at work here, for his friend Perugino, before he went to Siena, one may fairly credit him with a large share of that influence—and in this chapel vault we see, both in its division and in its coloured ornamentation, a treatment and method of colouring quite distinct from that of Perugino and identical with that of Pinturrichio—one need but step from the hall to the chapel to recognise the wide distinction.

PLATE III

CEILING OF THE SMALL CHAPEL ADJOINING THE SALA DI CAMBIO, PERUGIA

The text explains the setting out. The gilt moulded band which forms the divisions recalls a similar feature in the Appartamenti Borgia of the Vatican. The emphasis of the angles by the bright red panels, with their powdering of gold dots, and the character of the grotesque ornament, all go to show that Pinturrichio assisted Perugino here with his masterly command of decorative colouring.

CEILING OF THE SMALL CHAPEL ADJOINING THE SALA DI CAMBIO, PERUGIA

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PLATE IV

CAMERA DEL PSYCHE, PALAZZO DEL T., MANTUA
(GIULIO ROMANO)

One angle of the vaulted springing of the panelled ceiling is here shown, with the soffits of the vaulting. The accentuation of the angle by the little panels of bright red (which occur only in the angles of the room) will be noticed at once. They intercept the beautifully ornamented band of gold which divides the ceiling. The device is evidently borrowed from Pinturrichio, who used it at Perugia (Plate III) and elsewhere as a means of leading the eye to the outer limits of the room.

The dark blue of the pendentive and the small coffer panels above it would alone have seemed too tame where so much rich colouring occurs in the wall frescoes. A far more sober red is used in the other narrow panels of this ceiling.

CAMERA DEL PSYCHE, PALAZZO DEL T, MANTUA

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support by expressing the vaulted contour (Fig. 7). The strong mass of colour is thrown into the four pendentives. The margins which divide the ceiling panels have gold grounds, on which is painted coloured ornament attuning them to the panels.

We have the same principle in the vaulted ceiling of Raffaelle's stanza of "The School of Athens"—the ceiling which Raffaelle refused to destroy when commissioned to paint this room. It was by Gian-Antonio Bazzi (Sodoma), another Siennese.

By this same talented painter, Bazzi, in the Farnesina Palace at Rome, are the famous frescoes from the life of Alexander the Great, and the room which they adorn has a panelled ceiling which was probably coloured by him, or at least under his direction. It is a remarkable instance of the use of powerful colour in contiguity with noble pictorial art, and of the way in which sharp contrasts may be softened into harmony with the superimposed ornamentation in colour. It is divided by a deep and broad, moulded gilt framing into shaped panels, or coffers, the grounds of which are alternately bright red and rich green, of equal value; but upon these are painted light arabesque ornaments, polychromatic, which bring the two sharply contrasted grounds into pleasant relation to each other. The centre flat of the framing is painted blue, with a gold fret or "key" pattern upon it. This ceiling is another example of the use of counter-changed colours.*

Fig. 7. Sta. MARIA DEL POPOLO, ROME
(*Pinturrichio*)

In the upper story of the Palazzo Vecchio at Florence is a small chapel, in which formerly the members of the civic body worshipped, and which is a very beautiful example of decoration substituted for architectural expression. It is noticeable not only for its admirable Art, but for the simplicity of its colour-scheme, and is the work of Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, a friend of the young Raffaelle and son of that

* *See* Gruner's "Fresco Decorations" (1844), Pl. 30.

Domenico who is famous as one of the leaders in the advance of Florentine Art. The chapel is a mere apartment, with a total length of 32 ft., of which the little chancel or

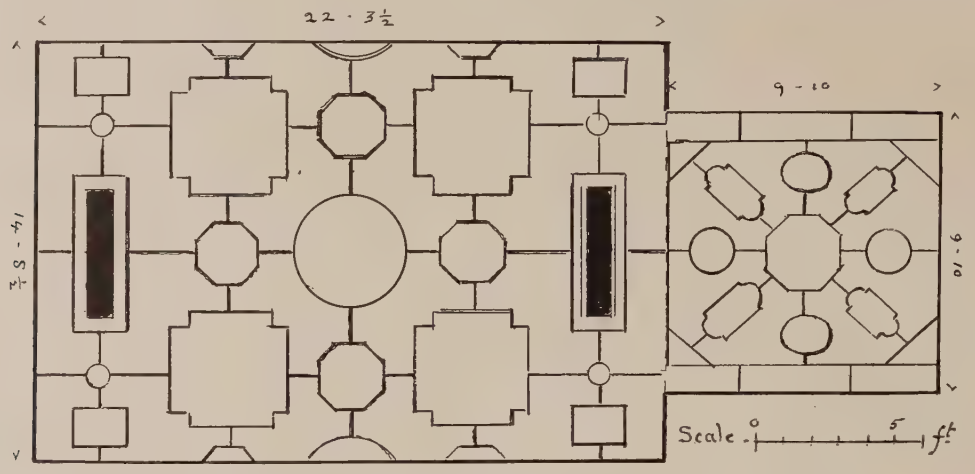

Fig. 8. SEGMENTAL CEILING OF CHAPEL, PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE (*Ridolfo Ghirlandaio*)

sanctuary is but 9 ft. 10 in. square. The body of the chapel being but 22 ft. 3 in. long, with a width of 14 ft. 8 in. It has a low waggon-head ceiling of segmental section, rising 5 ft. 6 in., and is set out in colour only, for it is devoid of any mouldings in relief, as are also the walls (Fig. 8). These last (but 9 ft. high) are divided by small pilasters of sepia-toned monochrome the ornamented panels of which have gold grounds and some blue introduced. The spaces between them were apparently hung with some form of tapestry, the hooks for which remain (Fig. 9). The main ceiling is divided into simple geometrical forms —a centre circular panel containing a picture of the Trinity, four smaller octagon medallions with groups of children carrying the emblems of the Passion ; and four larger squares, with broken angles, painted with figures of the Evangelists. These are all painted in colour on gold ground, framed by painted monochrome mouldings, between which a band of dark blue forms the connecting feature of the setting out (*see* coloured Plate V). The

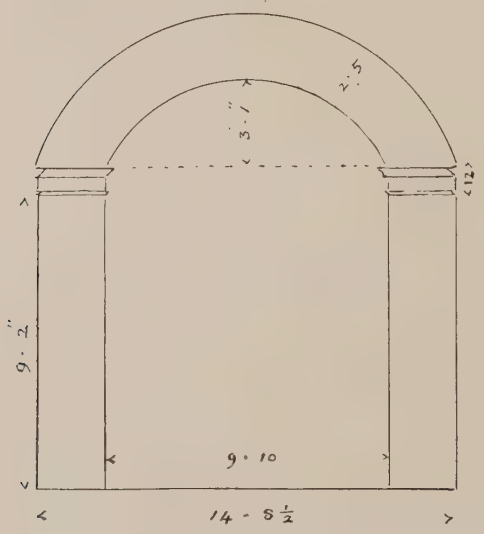

Fig. 9. SECTION OF CHAPEL

PLATE V

CEILING OF CHAPEL, PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE

(RIDOLFO GHIRLANDAIO)

This ceiling, of low segmental section, is well preserved and is an admirable example of well-balanced setting out and of the harmonious combination of pictorial and ornamental detail. The colouring of the pictorial panels is nowhere isolated ; nor is there any harshness of contrast between the gold grounds and the deep blue band which divides them. This is avoided by the use of the slight gold ornamentation at the intersections of the band ; while it will be noticed that the hatched gold ground extends to the pictorial panels. The black, which is sparingly used, gives purity to the colouring and is itself moderated by the gold inscription. A reference to Fig. 8 in the text will explain the relation of this plate to Plate VI.

CEILING OF CHAPEL, PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE

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PLATE VI

CEILING OF CHANCEL, CHAPEL IN THE PALAZZO VECCHIO, FLORENCE

This decoration is a continuance of that in the body of the Chapel (Plate V). It is sufficiently described in the text; but the ingenuity of the arrangement by which the twelve Apostles are introduced, alternately two and one, in the eight panels, may be pointed out.

It should be remembered that both ceilings are arched. The long blue panel of this one is at the springing of the segmental arch.

PLATE VI

CHAPEL OF THE CHANCEL, CHAPEL IN THE PALAZZO VECCHIO,
FLORENCE

CEILING OF CHANCEL, CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY, STRATFORD

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centre circle is supported externally by eight boy angels, which are in colour—all the remaining surfaces are ornamented in monochrome on a gold ground. This last is throughout treated in a method which gives it a warm tone and restores the sense of "surface" instead of glare. The gold is hatched over with brown lines, like the ioints of mosaic. It may be noticed that the Italian masters rarely left any large surfaces of gold without some such qualifying expedient.

The little chancel ceiling is treated in like manner (Plate VI). In the centre small octagon a dove with rays is painted in monochrome. Around this are alternately circular and small upright panels, four of each. In these are painted in colour the Apostles, two in each circle and one in each upright panel. At the four angles of this ceiling, and in a long panel at each side of the larger one, black is used. The obvious intention of this is to throw up the centre as well as to give value to the blue. In fact it does both, and is an admirable example of the judicious use of black. The whole decoration deserves the most careful study, for in distribution and balance of colour, no less than in the excellence of the pictorial features, we have here, in good condition, a very perfect example of decorative art at its best. It was painted in 1514, and is free from the influence of the antique Roman work of the Baths, which the painter had not seen (*see* Plates V–VI).

We come then to the wonderful group of men who assisted Raffaelle at the Vatican, and who were so greatly influenced by the antique decorations then recently laid bare in the remains of the Baths of Titus. These ancient decorations exhibited a refinement of line and delicacy of detail, combined with many natural forms, which so appealed to the Vatican painters as to affect all their ornamental designs thenceforward. The most prominent of these men in decorative work were Giulio Romano, Pierino del Vaga, and Giovanni da Udine, and it was from their hands, first at Rome, and soon after in many other places, that we find some of the finest examples of decoration, both in treatment and execution. Of those remaining and accessible may be named the "Villa Madama," sadly damaged but still full of beauty ; the Ducal Palaces of Mantua, which have suffered still more within the last forty years ; the Palace of Admiral Doria at Genoa, and others. Of their work in the Vatican loggia, full as it is of beautiful detail, there is no occasion to say much. Its novelty, the elegant fancy displayed throughout, and its marvellous execution took the contemporary art-world by storm ; and so long as it lasts it must remain a decorative marvel and a mine of ornamental design. Subjected to strict criticism it is open to some objections. The artists were carried away by their new discovery of the beautiful details in their antique models, and to some extent lost sight of the true decorative purpose. Exquisite as are the details, one must admit that there is too much, or rather, perhaps, that they somewhat entangle the attention ; nor

do they qualify that unfortunate horizontal line which forms so close a tangent with the crown of each dividing arch as to induce a sense of structural weakness. Briefly, full of beauty, it lacks unity. At the Villa Madama we find the work of Giulio Romano and Giovanni da Udine inspired by the same antique models, under more favourable conditions ; and here we can see the painter's decorative skill with equally fine detail, and can better follow his motive. There are three vaults, each treated differently. In all, the delicate ornament is equally lavish, but the distribution of his colour-masses is far more purposeful. It must be said that the architecture is, in itself, more expressive. Here we find the strongest value thrown into the pendentives from which the eye is led upward by well-marked colouring to the crown of the vault. In the centre bay (*see* Plate VII) the surface is divided by small enriched stucco mouldings, which are almost absent from the two others, and the pendentives are enriched with a fine scroll relief ornament in white on a full blue ground. This blue with white is recalled at short intervals in the small square coffers which occur in emphasis of the divisional setting out, and is besides employed as the ground of the delicate floral ornament of the small dividing bands (*b* in Plate VII). The circular base of the vault is well marked out by two rings or bands, neither of them absolutely continuous in colour. In the lower ring the blue recurs in small longitudinal panels with margins of a soft green tint, divided into lengths by oval cameos in relief. The upper contiguous band is similarly divided, but at alternate points, by the small square blue coffers, spoken of above, the longer lengths having a ground of cameo red.

The remaining spaces are white, delicately ornamented with leaf ornament, surrounding circular medallions which have gold grounds, and the crown of the vault has a circular panel on which is a gilt shield of arms ; the ground of a lighter blue. The whole treatment is most instructive, as well as extremely beautiful ; though it can best be appreciated by reference to the original or to the model.* In this case the blue is made the constructive key-note, and the profusion of delicate detail is not allowed to distract attention from the architectural form. In the low vaults on either side of, and somewhat lower than this central one of the loggia, the artist has made less use of stucco divisions, but has carried his stronger colouring around the base and up the angles to the centre by means of coloured grounds filled in to the ornament, in which he has been evidently influenced by the decorations of the ancient remains at the Baths of Titus. This method he further pursued in his decorations elsewhere, particularly at Mantua, where he was so extensively employed, and where his work was, within our own time, in a good state of preservation.† (Plates IV, VIII, IX, X.)

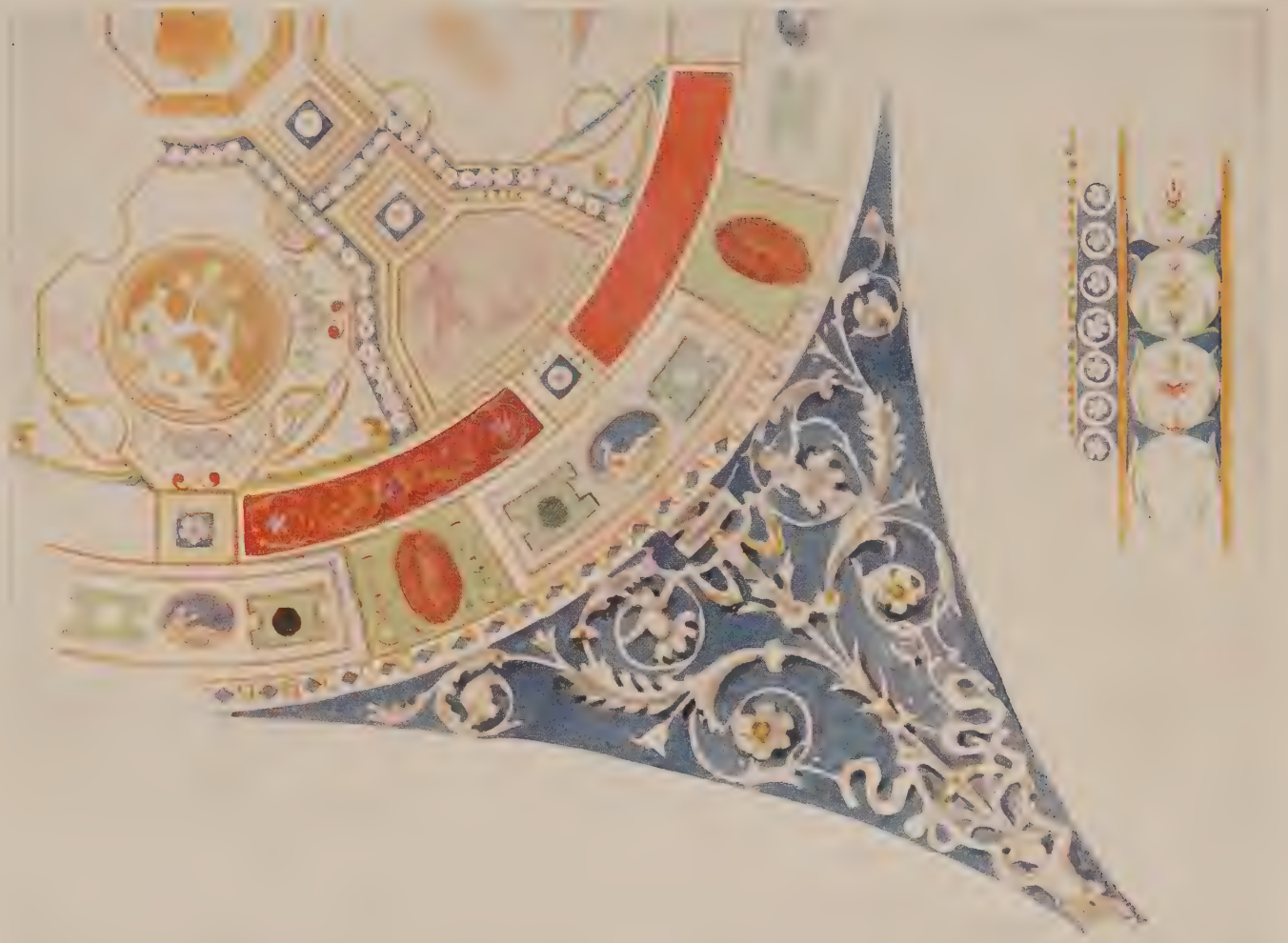
* At South Kensington Museum.

† During the last forty years, however, these works have grievously suffered from neglect and damp : some are quite destroyed ; others can only be discerned with difficulty, and their colouring made out piecemeal. Thus,

PLATE VII

CENTRE VAULT OF LOGGIA, VILLA MADAMA, ROME

The pendentive, with its white and gold relief ornament, gives the key-note to the expression by colour of the structural form; from it the small block-course, with blue lozenges, carries that colour around the base of the low dome. The blue is repeated in the oval medallions of the wider border, and in the little coffers which break the red band of that which succeeds it, and which forms a sort of girdle to the whole. From this the blue and white is again carried up in the elegant little border, of which the detail is shown in the margin of the drawing. In this it will be seen how the minute detail only softens the white without confusing the form.



VAULT OF LOGGIA

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SALA DEGLI ARAZZI, PALAZZO DUCALE, MANTUA (*Giulio Romano*) [*Alinari phot.*

GALLERIA, PALAZZO DUCALE, MANTUA (*Giulio Romano and Giovanni da Udine*) [*Alinari phot.*

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PLATE X

CAMERA DEI CESARI, PALAZZO DEL T., MANTUA
(GIULIO ROMANO)

The constructive lines are here marked out by the enriched gilt moulding, with its white margins, and these are continued as the dividing element of the panelled ceiling.
The vaulted cove is boldly emphasised by the red soffits, this being the important structural feature. The smaller dark blue panels in the ceiling not only simplify the scheme of division, but give a more aerial quality to the sky backgrounds of the figure panels. The room being very high for its size, the ceiling is further connected with the walls by the elegant device of the gilt festoons which serve to continue the dividing moulding whilst framing the picture medallions.

CAMERA DEI CESARI, PALAZZO DEL T, MANTUA

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In a side chapel of the Church of San Sisto at Piacenza is a very pretty example of the simplest form of division of a low cupola or vault (Fig. 10). This is effected by

Fig. 10. VAULT OF CHAPEL IN CHURCH OF SAN SISTO, PIACENZA.

eight painted ribs of white moulding with a narrow band of dark blue up the middle, of

one of the most valuable schools of ornamental decoration has, in a few years, been thrown away, after existing in full beauty for some three hundred and fifty years—a melancholy result of political changes. The Mantuan decorations, both in the old Ducal Palace, and in the Palazzo del T. should be well studied, for they are not only rich in beautiful ornament and colouring, and of great variety, but they represent the decorative treatment of residential apartments, although in a scale of magnificence and elaboration unlikely to be repeated. They exhibit a quite inexhaustible invention and fancy, and turn to account every suggestion of Nature. The lavish use of painted ornament is, however, not indiscriminate; nor is it allowed to obliterate architectural form, even when most elaborate. In the Plates (viii–ix) it will at once be recognised with how firm a hand the elegant, and often minutely detailed "grotesques" are controlled by bands or margins of colour, on simple lines, which restore simplicity of form and express structural stability. The artist understood that, even when gratifying his princely client's desire for elaboration, he had a duty to the building itself.

each, meeting in a small circle at the centre. In each of the eight spaces thus left is a seated boy angel against a shaded blue, or sky, back ground, the whole being tied together at the base by a band or frieze, with ornament in indigo blue and red on a gold ground. The pendentives are divided by a dark lilac band enclosing a circular medallion having a small subject in monochrome on gold ; the spandrils black with shaded white ornament. The effect of this use of the black below is to purify the blue and to throw up the vault ; a result to which the lilac margin also contributes.

The roof of this same church has an interesting treatment in yellow, white and blue. The waggon-head vault is subdivided into small square panels, or quasi "coffers," by bands of yellow between white mouldings, and having small blue squares, with rosettes at the intersections, the panels being of a rather lighter blue with white ornament. This yellow is modified by a fine niello design in black, which softens and mellows it in the same way as does the fine gold interlace which we so often find used on blue margins for the same purpose. The general effect is singularly luminous, as colouring ; but, being continued in unbroken repetition over large surfaces, is somewhat tame and monotonous.

A sort of parallel to this colour arrangement may be seen in the earlier wooden vaulting of the church of St. Stephano, at Venice, where the whole surface is divided into small squares, alternately yellow and a light grey-blue, by flat wooden strips in white with some black ornament. In each panel is a star or rosette. It is not very effective, and the tones used are probably not accurately restored ; but it has the same lighting power as the roof at San Sisto, which is worth remembering.

The use of fine black ornament on yellow ground, used with the object of qualifying the yellow, is not infrequent. One such example occurs in the Sala del Cambio, at Perugia (Plate II (B)). Reference to the illustration will show how effectively the thin black line tones the strong yellow into harmony with its more neutral surroundings.

Another instance of the use of yellow qualified by fine black ornament—in this case a delicate interlace—occurs at Parma, in the sacristy of San Giovanni Evangelista. It is here used with good effect in the bands that mark out the curved vaulting which carries the flat ceiling. This vaulting is also an example of that counter-changing of the colours in the soffits which is so frequent a device with the decorators of the Italian renaissance. In the present case these soffits are painted alternately a warm green and a Venetian red, both alike being ornamented with shaded arabesque in stone colour. The lunettes are of a light stone tint, upon which are painted tablets, ribbons, &c., in a darker monochrome ; while the face of all the pendentives is in deep blue, with grisaille ornament, the centres of them

being occupied by cameo medallions, surrounded by margins of the same yellow, also broken by delicate black ornament. Similar use of this thread-like black ornamentation occurs in the white margins of the ceiling panels. One can hardly doubt its being by the same hand as that in the Church of San Sisto, Piacenza, already mentioned above.

To turn again to that group of men who had been Raffaelle's assistants and fellow workers at the Vatican. Within a few years of the master's death they were dispersed. The terrible sack of Rome by the French in 1527 drove away those who could escape. Some were made miserable prisoners ; all were for the time ruined. How much beautiful work perished we can but guess. Fortunately, an artist carries his talent with him, and we find most of them again in different parts of Italy. One of them, Pierino del Vaga, found employment in beautifying that palace which had been presented by the Genoese to their great Admiral, Andrea Doria ; and in its open loggia,* overlooking the garden and the sea, Pierino executed one of the most beautiful decorative works which remains to us. From this loggia Andrea overlooked not only the garden but all the harbour which it overhung, the ships in which he had fought, and those which his victories had made free of the sea. The vault shown is one of three, which vary from each other (*see* Plate XI). In the centre is an octagon painting emblematic of his career : the subject does not concern us. It is framed by a small white and gold moulding, then by a band of maroon red : outside this a narrow margin of cool green, and then a wide enriched moulding of stucco, white and gold. The rest of the vault is very simply set out from this octagon. On the four sides towards the crowns of the supporting arches are upright oblong panels with maroon grounds, on each of which a little subject with two children is modelled in white stucco. The spandrils which remain are, like the centre octagon, surrounded by the wide enriched moulding with the small green line within it, the panel being ornamented in stucco on a gold ground. This gold ground is hatched over in brown, as the maroon panels also are in white, the object in both cases being to soften the tone and *express surface*. All these panels are divided by a margin of deep blue, on which is a fine interlace of gold, which performs the same function as the hatching just described. Outside the whole is a beautiful border of small panels, in which all the above-named colours have a part (except that the blue is lighter), and a little black is introduced to give force and to give purity to the other colours. This border is enclosed between two yellow bands which are protracted into the pendentive, where it forms the ground on which a stucco figure, in low relief, appears to support each angle of the vault.

* It was very ably restored in 1845, and is now enclosed by glass.

This is a most instructive bit of ceiling decoration. Every part is made tributary to the constructive impression of the whole, while the often minute detail never disturbs the breadth of treatment. If we analyse it we find the blue margin to be that which first emphasises the sense of construction, while the broader stucco moulding assists in leading the attention towards the pendentives. The outer border of rich colour supports and binds together the colouring of the rest, and this purpose is completed by the yellow bands which are extensions from the pendentives. The small green line effects that recall of colour which is so important to harmony, and this green occurs sparingly in the outside border.

The hatching, though mosaic-like in effect, is not meant to imitate mosaic, but is a recognised device to counteract the glare of gold and to express the true surface, which is apt to be lost where gold or very dark colour are used as grounds. The whole shows a mastery of decorative principle as well as of colouring that should be carefully studied. The walls, it may be mentioned, are covered with fresco paintings of rich colouring.

One method adopted by the earlier Italians to keep the constructive lines of a large interior clearly expressed, notwithstanding the attraction of pictorial or ornamental treatment, was to carry up the exposed material if of a decided colouring, as brick ; or, where that has been plastered or painted over, to paint a suggestion or even an imitation of it. Thus in the Church of the Frari at Venice, a brick building, the main ribs of the apse are a continuation of the attached columns below, in brick, the spaces between being decorated in colour with borders and ornament. The Church of St. Anastasia, at Verona, is an example of the constructive features of the roof being shown in red brick, in this case painted. The spaces here are also ornamentally decorated in colour. One of the best and most effective examples of such treatment is the Church of Santa Trinita, in Florence, where the arches are blocked out in alternate courses of black and white stone, while the cross ribs are supported by wide borders in colour on either side. It is perhaps worth while to take each of these three examples and examine them more in detail.

In the Church of the Frari, Venice, the polygonal apse, as already stated, is divided by the large brick roll which, dividing the windows like an attached column below, is continued up as a great plain brick rib between the sections of the roof. The window jambs and arches are blocked out in alternate stone and red brick. A bold border of brick red with yellow twisted-leaf ornament frames the spaces of the vault, and supports or spreads the brick ribs. It is also returned over the window arches. The plastered space between is decorated with foliage ornament in greens and brown, springing from a circle in the centre of each section, similarly bordered, which circle is painted in Gothic tracery, like a small rose window.

PLATE XI

VAULT OF THE OPEN LOGGIA, PALAZZO DORIA, GENOA

(PIERINO DEL VAGA)

The wall is treated pictorially, in fresco; the colouring of rich warm tones. The wide band, which frames the whole vault and includes the pendentive, has a deep yellow ground. Up the centre of this runs a border of brilliant colours, geometrically blocked out, divided by a fine white line, and ornamented with minutely painted grotesques. Among these colours black occurs at regular intervals, serving to accentuate this outer limit of the ceiling. The structural division of the vault is suggested by the deep blue margin, with its filagree gold ornament, aided by the white and gold mouldings which frame the panels. The emphasis of the four rectangular panels in dull red gives a certain firm stability to the whole, in which the various colours of the frescoed walls are thus skilfully recalled in the ceiling. Notice with what effect the fine green line around the gold panels assists this recall and the balance of the colouring.

VAULT OF THE OPEN LOGGIA, PALAZZO DORIA, GENOA

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PLATE XII

FRIEZE AND VAULTED CORNICE OF THE SALA DEI GIGANTI, PALAZZO DORIA, GENOA

The walls and ceiling of this fine hall are covered with pictorial frescoes, and are separated by this decoration. It is to be noticed here that very elaborate and even minute ornamentation nowhere disturbs the simplicity of the main lines of colour. It is used to modify the tones without disturbing or confusing those " constructive " lines which connect the rich colouring of the walls with that of the ceiling.

It is necessary to explain that the drawing omits the strong shadows incidental to the vaulted form, which considerably tone down the brilliancy of the colours.

FRIEZE AND VAULTED CORNICE OF THE SALA DEI GIGANTI,
PALAZZO DORIA, GENOA

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PLATE XIII

CEILING AND CORNICE IN THE PALAZZO GRIMANI, DI SANTA MARIA FORMOSA, VENICE

The room is square, with a flat ceiling springing with a very flat cove from the walls, and with little or no moulded cornice. The plaster enrichments are small in detail and with slight relief.

In place of cornice, the artist has so treated the flat cove, by formal division and weight of colour, as to make it a satisfactory substitute.

The skill with which he has arranged the proportion of indigo-blue to red as a ground for his elegant little figures in relief, should be noticed, as should the way in which these two colours are carried throughout to express the formal setting out. The effect is to raise the centre and to maintain a pleasant and quiet harmony throughout.

This is said to be a work of *Giovanni da Udine;* the style and execution confirm this attribution and show the influence of the antique Roman work which inspired his decorative treatment.

PLATE XIII

CEILING AND CORNICE IN THE PALAZZO GRIMANI, DI
SANTA MARIA FORMOSA, VENICE

CEILING AND CORNICE IN THE PALAZZO GRIMANI, DI SANTA MARIA FORMOSA, VENICE

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It may be said at once that the ornament is coarse and ungainly, but we are here concerned with the colour treatment as affecting the expression of the architecture. The aim is obvious, and the result accomplishes its purpose in a simple and legitimate manner.

Fig. 11. SANTA TRINITA, FLORENCE

The decoration of the Church of St. Anastasia, Verona, is practically continued throughout the upper part of the church. In its general system it is not unlike that which we have just considered at the Frari ; but no constructive brickwork appears inside the church ; what we see is all painted. Here the arches are blocked out in red brick and light stone, which serves to keep the main constructive features well expressed, while the spaces are bordered and ornamented with bold foliage, chiefly green, on the light ground.*

It is open to the criticism, that the brick treatment is confined to the *face* of the archivolt, the soffit being ornamented on a light ground, which detracts from the strength and simplicity of the effect. The general purpose is, nevertheless, accomplished. It is a suggestive example for the treatment of an interior without mouldings.

The third example of a similar treatment of the arches in a church is that of Santa Trinita, Florence (Fig. 11). In this case the blocking out of alternate voussoirs does not represent brick, but black and white stone. There can be little doubt that the method has been used here with a finer sense of what is constructionally expressive than in St. Anastasia. The voussoirs are shown complete ; that is to say, both sides and soffit show the alternate blocks of black and white. A bold line of red divides these from the contiguous borderings ; and this red margin is used throughout as a guide to the eye in recognising the architectural forms, while it assists in welding together those forms with the pictorial frescoes which extensively occupy the plain

* The details are given in Gruner's "Ornamental Art," published in 1850. The work itself is dated 1437, which Gruner seems to have overlooked.

surfaces between. At the apex of each pointed arch of the nave a small sculptured shield is inserted ; this, with its blue and gold, gives a useful point of emphasis. The red margin breaks round it, thus making it a sort of keystone. As a general result the decoration is most satisfactory. The architecture is explained ; the main lines of the building are kept distinct from the rich colouring of the frescoes, with which they nevertheless harmonise ; and a delightful sense of simplicity and repose is produced, leaving the mind at rest to enjoy the detail. There is, in fact, much variety in the treatment of different parts of the church ; but the one method of expressing the structure avoids confusion.

Several of the churches built during the Gothic period in Italy (say twelfth to fourteenth centuries) were constructed in alternate courses of black and white marble, and in some this method was continued within and extended to the internal columns. Examples of this are to be seen at Orvieto and Siena. In the latter place both the Cathedral and the contiguous Baptistery, or Church of San Giovanni, are so built. This use of strong contrasts in the structure must have presented some difficulties to the decorator. In the Cathedral they were met by the use of a strong red in simple form at the cornice line. In the Baptistery where the walls are covered with fresco paintings, the structure of the vaulting is marked out by rich colour and ornate detail, recalling the colour in the wall pictures, defined by margins and frame-work in subdued white, which carries up the white in the columns (*see* Frontispiece).

In many painted decorations of the Italian masters it will be seen that monochrome is largely used in conjunction with rich colouring, to which, if judiciously employed, it gives additional value. This will be observed in the works of the earlier, as well as of the later painters. Sometimes as architectural adornment, at others in the form of smaller subjects and medallions, it is used in such a way as to assist in framing or separating the more important paintings, or in connecting lines of structure. It is, in fact, a modulation of white, a substitution for plastic relief, affording, by the gradations from white to black or brown, a subdued contrast to the adjoining colours.

In Venetian decorations, particularly, monochrome is often found associated with black grounds, as in the roof of the Church of Sta. Maria dei Miracoli (*see* Plate XIV), or in the ceiling of the Sacristy of the Church of St. Sebastiano (*see* Plate XV). There can be no doubt that where the decorative paintings were executed with strong reliefs of light and shade, and with much toning of the colours (as in the case of Tintoretto, Paul Veronese, and others of that school), the proximate use of black and monochrome tended greatly to purify and illuminate the adjoining pictorial colouring, which, without this aid, would have appeared heavy and sombre. Tintoretto's wonderful

PLATE XIV

PART OF THE WOODEN PANELLED CEILING OF THE NAVE, SANTA MARIA DEI MIRACOLI, VENICE

This is a boarded ceiling of simple construction in which the square picture panels are recessed with bevelled sides. The repetition setting out, although simple, is singularly elegant and effective, with plain gilt mouldings. The dividing band or style, as in so many instances, is blue, the leaf and stem ornament upon it being, in this case, gold colour, not gold.

The shaped panels which surround the square pictures, including the bevel, are all ornamented in grisaille monochrome on black; while the lozenge which marks the repeat has a quiet red ground. This effectually prevents the isolation of the pictures, and gives a pleasant emphasis to the general design.

PART OF THE WOODEN PANELLED CEILING OF THE NAVE.
SANTA MARIA DEI MIRACOLI, VENICE

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PLATE XV

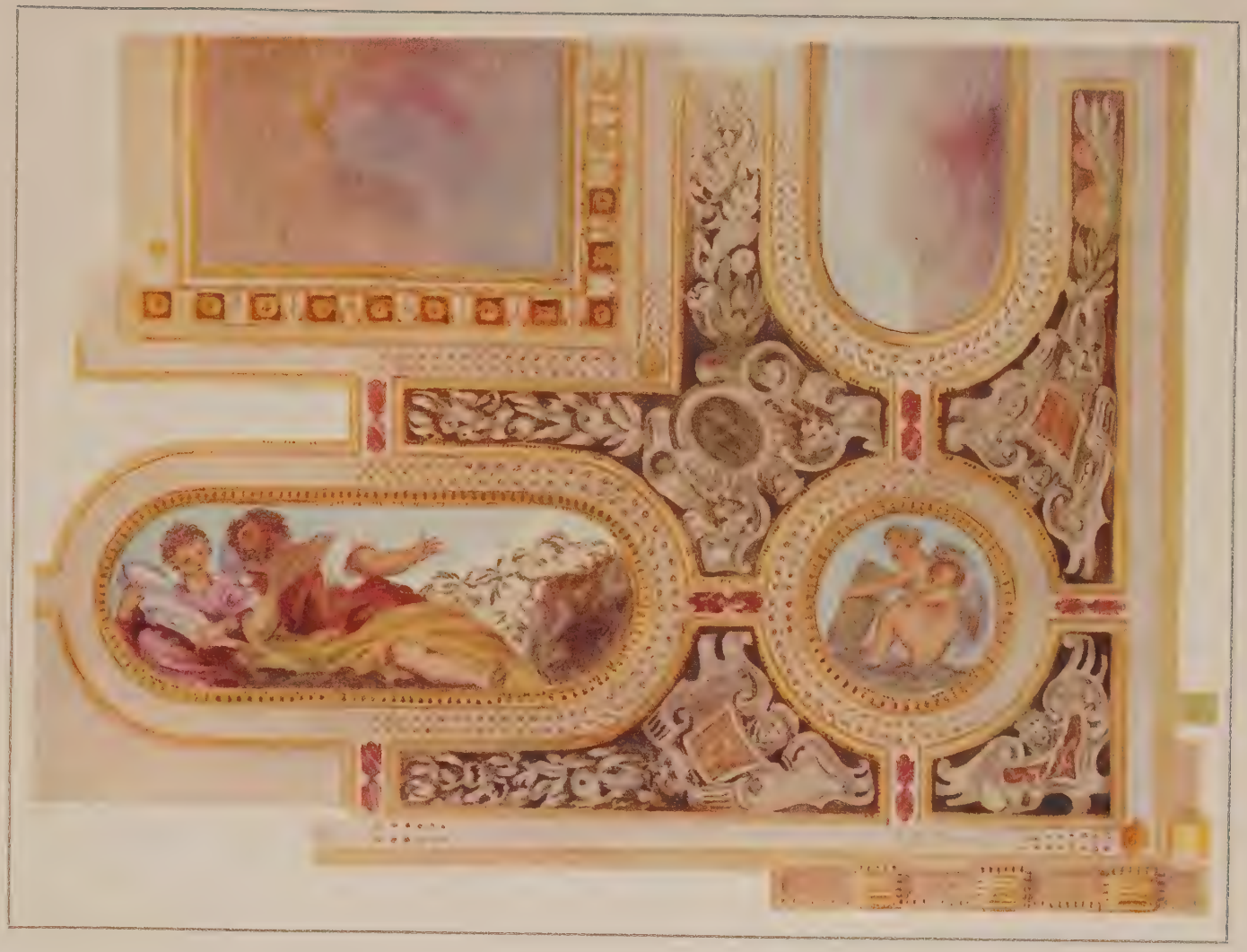
CEILING OF SACRISTY, S. SEBASTIANO, VENICE

In the Church of S. Sebastiano and its Sacristy Paul Cagliari (Veronese) is to be seen at his best, certainly as to decorative work.

Here is a flat ceiling divided by fairly bold moulded bands into panels which are treated pictorially, the grounds between them occupied by bold monochrome ornaments on black.

The bands themselves are painted in light monochrome with gilt mouldings. These, running through the whole and according with the cornice, form the constructive feature.

An important item in these bands is the apparently slight introduction of small panels of red at the points of connection. These carry a recall of the red tones of the pictures into the constructive bands, giving unity to the whole. The same purpose is evident in the introduction of a little colour in the cartouches on the black and monochrome intermediary panels.



CEILING OF SACRISTY, S. SEBASTIANO, VENICE *(Paul Veronese)*

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PART OF THE CEILING OF NAVE, S. SEBASTIANO, VENICE (*Paul Veronese*)

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PLATE XVII

PART OF THE CEILING OF THE GREAT HALL, SCUOLA DI S. ROCCO, VENICE

The ceiling is of vast size, panelled with boldly carved ornamental mouldings, which frame Tintoretto's great pictures.

The drawing shows but a small part—an angle of one of these great panels.

It affords an excellent example of bold treatment undisturbed by the elaboration of the delicate ornamentation which has been lavished upon it. The bordering of dark blue defines the forms of the setting out. The wider "cartouche" border of quiet brown on black ground serves to give value to the colouring of the somewhat dark paintings, a colouring slightly recalled in the figure grotesques on the gold grounds. The black is moderately and adroitly used again to frame the cool, dark monochrome paintings in the lozenge-shaped panels.

PLATE XVII

PART OF THE CEILING OF THE GREAT HALL, SCUOLA DI S. ROCCO, VENICE

[illegible] is of vast size, panelled with boldly carved ornamental mouldings, which frame [illegible] oretto's great pictures.

[illegible] which has been lavished upon it. The bordering of dark blue defines the forms [illegible] to frame the cool, dark monochrome paintings in the lozenge-shaped panels.

PART OF THE CEILING OF THE GREAT HALL · SCUOLA DI · ROCCO VENICE

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ceiling of the Great Hall in the "Scuola di S. Rocco" is an excellent instance of this, and should be carefully studied from this point of view (*see* Plate XVII). Darkened as the paintings are by time, they still keep their plane; and although the original brilliancy of colour is gone, the support given by black and a dark rich blue, in the marginal framing, can at once be recognised.

Other ceilings in the Ducal Palace exemplify the same appreciation of the value of black and monochrome. Thus, in the "Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci" and again in the "Sala del Collegio" figures painted in monochrome on black grounds occupy panels between those which contain subjects in colour. It must, however, be borne in mind, both here and in the "Scuola di S. Rocco," that the rooms are vast, the panels of the ceilings deeply sunk, and the framework of a boldness of relief and splendour of gilding rarely met with. There are, therefore, great depths of shadow; and where these strong contrasts in relief exist, a proportionate depth of colour is demanded.

Nevertheless, where there is little or no shadow or relief, black, and black as a ground for monochrome, which tempers it, remains a valuable asset in conjunction with pictorial treatment in decoration. It is useful to remember that the proximity of black purifies adjacent colour, and that, contrariwise, white, or modified white, deepens, and to some extent, degrades colour in its neighbourhood.

Monochrome of some definite tone of colour was also frequently used decoratively in connection with pictorial treatment. An example is the large panelled ceiling of the Nave of the Church of St. Sebastiano, at Venice, which includes some of the finest of the paintings of Cagliari (Paul Veronese), (Plate XVI), in which the large spandrils with angels and all the framing margins are of a russet-brown tone, while the main borders are white with trailing foliage. I cite this example as one well known for the painter's *chefs d'œvres*, although it is not, as a whole, very successful as colouring. As decoration it is certainly inferior to the same painter's beautiful ceiling of the sacristy already mentioned (Plate XV).

CHAPTER VI

THE DECORATIVE PICTURE

SO much has been said and written as to what are "decorative" pictures, that a few words seem necessary to point out that no picture is, *by itself*, decorative, in the sense of decorating or beautifying any interior, unless it be part of a scheme which is expressive of the structure.

The actual style of painting, so that it be not obviously inconsistent with the character of the building, is not of great importance, although in composition there are matters to be taken into account which will be considered later.

The one important point is that the subject shall be treated as *in a diffused light*—that is, that it shall not present strong contrasts of light and shade or cast strong shadows.

Given such a picture, how is it to be made a part of the wall on which it is painted?

In the first place, there must be some border or margin so treated that the colouring of the picture is not abruptly separated altogether from that of its surroundings, although the pictorial limit be quite clearly defined. This will be accomplished by recalling in the detail of the border some of the colour which occurs in the picture; the artist will also take care that the latter includes some of the tones which predominate in the surrounding surface.

This last is a point which the painter too often disregards; but it is one which the great masters of mural painting invariably observed. To produce a truly decorative result, care must be taken that the eye may pass readily beyond the confines of the picture, and it is by the above-mentioned treatment that this effect is secured.

Then it should be the object of the decorator to ensure that, once beyond the picture, the spectator's attention should be led *first* to such features as imply stability. How he is to do this by colour has already been described (*see* Chap. II).

Where a mural picture is of large size, and particularly if its length be considerable,

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PLATE XVIII

"THE ANNUNCIATION." WALL-PAINTING, SANTA MARIA NOVELLA, FLORENCE
[*Alinari phot.*

there will always be an effect of weakened structure unless some means be taken by the painter to correct this tendency. The idea of vertical support is needed. It was with this object that the masters of mural painting so generally introduced some architecture into their compositions. The vertical lines of column or pilaster at once suggested support. They had the further advantage of importing into the picture the tones of the surrounding stonework. Examples of this use of pictorial representation of architecture will be found in the mural paintings of all the great painters of such works, from those of Giotto and his school down to the end of the sixteenth century ; that is to say throughout the decorative period of painting. (Plate XVIII, Figs. 12 and 13).

Fig. 12. DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS. SANTA TRINITA, FLORENCE
(*Dom. Ghirlandaio*)

Moreover, where actual architecture was not used, but where the painter recognised the requirement of some simple vertical lines to maintain the plane of the wall surface, a substitute was often found—a canopy or some pendent object. Devices of this kind frequently recur. Besides marking the plane or surface, they form a valuable contrast to the curves and sweeping lines of the figures in the composition, and impart a certain repose to the picture.

Landscape, otherwise than as a background, can never alone afford a satisfactory decoration. Landscape in itself requires atmospheric perspective, and that is inimical to the maintenance of surface. But where the structural idea is supplied in the nearer plane of the picture, or by the form of the space in which it is painted—such as an arch—landscape may become a very delightful feature of mural decoration. Nevertheless the interest and colour of the human figure is very desirable in the immediate foreground.

There is a very charming instance of this treatment in a vaulted apartment of the Palazzo Martinengo (della Fabbrica)* at Brescia. It is painted by Alessandro

Buonvicino, better known as "Il Moretto," a pupil of Titian's. Being vaulted, each wall presents an arched surface ; the idea of self-support exists. These walls, right and left, are painted with a garden landscape, with a parapet in front and a sort of garden canopy in the centre. Seated on the parapet, on either side of this canopy, is a lady in rich attire. These are portraits of ladies of the family. The centre canopy gives the required expression of "plane" and vertical line, the space altogether being rather large ; the figures give colour and life interest. The vault is beautifully decorated in rich colour.

Fig. 13. THE ECSTASY OF ST. CATHERINE, S. DOMENICO, SIENA (1527)
(*Giov. Ant. Bazzi—Sodoma*)

These few words will be sufficient to express the general principles which should guide the painter in decorative work. The writer does not presume to give more, and holds that to affect an archaic treatment is neither good sense nor good art. The painter who studies not only the pictorial treatment but the setting of the decorative works of the great mural painters of the past will find as much to learn from one as the other, and will besides learn not to dread, but to value, accessory colour beyond the limits of his picture. One thing, too, he may learn from works in true fresco—the value of outline in work to be seen at some distance. In them it is the result of the method ; but all mural painting on a large scale gains by the clearing effect of outline if so used as not to obtrude itself on the observer.

* There are three "Martinengo" Palaces at Brescia. This room is illustrated in Gruner's "Fresco Decorations of Italy."

CHAPTER VII

IMITATIONS

IN dealing with "principles" in decoration the subject of imitative treatment can hardly be altogether ignored, for it is a practice which has, during the last fifty years, been a constant subject of easy criticism. Nevertheless, it has the sanction of all the previous centuries from a remote antiquity. I allude particularly to the imitation of various woods and marbles.

In some of the oldest tombs of Egypt imitations of wood-planking were found painted on plaster. In the Græco-Roman decorations of Pompeii there occur the imitations of both wood and marble.

In the decorative work of the early Italian masters, such as Giotto and his school, imitations of marble and of mosaic were in constant use; one may almost say that the practice was carried to excess; and it continued in extensive use throughout the Renaissance.

Now, if all these men—some of whom were the greatest decorative artists the world has known—found it desirable to have recourse to such imitations, we may assume that it was not without reason, and that there was more justification for the practice, *as they used it*, than the modern amateur critic is disposed to allow.

The first and most obvious reason for its use was undoubtedly that in the imitation of marble they found a ready means of introducing *blended* tones of broken colour, a matter of no small importance.

Any observer may notice in what a large proportion of old pictures, including those by the best masters and of all schools, some representation of marble occurs.

The painters were doubtless influenced by various reasons; but in many—perhaps in most—cases it was because it afforded a means of introducing the low tones of a colour, broken up by, or blended with others in a convenient and simple way, to suit the harmony of the composition.

One of our own talented painters, the late Sir Lawrence Alma Tadema, is known as using this device with remarkable effect, both as to purpose and as to technical skill in the representation; and critical observation of his work will show what value these

softly blended tones have in giving unity to the colouring of the picture. The tender gradations in his white marble benches or parapets enable him to make use of large masses of white without harsh or crude effect ; and the skill with which he uses his coloured marble columns or other features, as tributary to his scheme of colour, would alone show that the decorator has, in the imitation of marble *when suitably used*, a device of very definite value.

Let us, then, consider in what way such imitations may be suitably or properly used ; and on the other hand when they become meretricious and offensive.

It is hardly necessary to point out that the imitation of a material should never be used in positions where the material itself would be impossible or preposterous, as, for instance, in painting a door to look like marble. But one may also say that such imitations should not be used as mere display, serving no object, artistic or other. It is the incongruity of its use that has brought it into disrepute.

When we see the interior walls of a cottage or of the staircase of a cheap dwelling-house covered with imitation marble, we feel its inconsistency with common sense ; and what is inconsistent with common sense is bad taste. On the other hand we must remember, in criticising the buildings of our grandfathers, that although they might desire the effect of marble, the real marbles, which are now so frequently used, were not accessible to them, even when they could afford them.

It not rarely happens, however, that we are confronted with the question of the colour treatment of buildings—especially public buildings—in which, for one reason or another, the architect has thought it desirable to have columns or other very definite constructive features of which the surface is executed in plaster, generally because the means are not available for a more costly reality. Now, a plaster column is in itself unreal. It may conceal support of brick or iron, or it may be mere "scenery." In such a case it is difficult to see why such concealment should not be itself dealt with imitatively, if by that means architectural effect and agreeable harmony can be secured.

So with a plaster dado, if its treatment be otherwise consistent with stony material, the introduction of painted marble, if the required colouring can be so obtained, seems not unreasonable. The great Raffaelle thought so, for he made use of it in some of the "Stanze," where cost was not much studied ; but by this means he obtained, where he wanted it, that commingled dark colouring in low tones which he needed as a base for his wall-frescoes. The mediæval decorators used that as well as other imitations—such as those of draperies, of jewels, &c., where they required them for colour and to give richness to the effect.

So also with woodwork. The "graining" to resemble other woods when used for

a purpose seems legitimate. It affords a means of obtaining the required colour with some variation of tone, and it is not every one who can afford oak or mahogany doors at, say, £20 each. It is also but fair to remember that a grained door will stand hard wear much longer than one painted in plain colour—an argument not to be quite ignored.

Imitations of inlay, painted on the natural wood, are also sometimes very effective. Examples may be seen in the sacristy of Santa Maria delle Grazie at Milan, and in several of the rooms at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire, work of Queen Elizabeth's time, the ornament being painted in black upon the oak with very charming effect.

We may, I think, conclude by the general statement that such imitations, when used with some definite purpose and with discretion, may fairly be included in the armoury of the decorative colourist ; but at the same time, that being work of some skill and demanding but little study of colour, it is peculiarly liable to abuse, for the "grainer" knows that his skill in imitation is sure to please the crowd, and is tempted to its display beyond the limits within which a just knowledge of decorative effect would restrain it.

CHAPTER VIII

MODERN WORK

HAVING in the preceding chapters endeavoured to show that the great masters of decorative painting worked upon well-understood general principles in the distribution of their colours, and how their decorative colouring was used to support and extend the effect of their pictorial decoration into a general scheme which expressed or recognised important features of the structure, it may be useful to show that these principles, once grasped, are readily applicable now, even in simple decoration and in such as is unaccompanied by pictorial art. To any decorative artist who has once perceived the importance of these principles they should soon become instinctive—his first thought in dealing with any coloured treatment of an interior. It is with this object that I venture to give a few examples from my personal experience, illustrating works executed during the last thirty years or so of the nineteenth century.

The most important modern Decorative work executed in this country is certainly that by Sir William Richmond, in the Choir of St. Paul's Cathedral. In this the pictorial work and that occupying the larger areas are in mosaic. These spaces, however, are contained within a constructive framework in relief. It will be found that all this "constructional" work is definitely and well kept together in a light tone, and that the gilding which assists this expression is bold and on a worthy scale.

The artist, in undertaking this great work, did not come to it with only the experience of picture galleries: he was already familiar with the decorative work of the Italian masters; and his first step before attempting mosaic was to make a special study abroad of the methods of the great mosaicists of the past. The result is a great and noble work which does justice to an architectual masterpiece.

It could only be properly illustrated in monograph; but the work itself is so well known and so accessible that it may well be merely referred to here, for it is best studied on the spot. Apart from the mosaic, such colour as is used in the constructive features is introduced with firmness and judgment. The generation which was

PLATE XIX

CEILING AT LONGLEAT

The object of inserting a few modern examples is to show the application of the same principles as are exemplified in those by old masters.

This is a horizontal ceiling, in which it was required to make use of an old circular Venetian painting. The surface has therefore been panelled out by mouldings, the direction of which is expressed more definitely by the dark blue margins with the fine gold interlaced pattern to soften the contrast.

These blue margins represent the "suggestion of structure." The black angle panels, with trophies of "War," "Art," "Commerce," and "Music," give weight and emphasis to the points from which the structural lines spring.

The narrow maroon-red margins recall the colour in the walls and help to lighten the centre, whilst the green border to the spandril panels introduces a tone requisite to the harmony.

Compare the old examples (Plates XI, XVII).

CEILING AT LONGLEAT

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PLATE XX

ENTRANCE STAIRCASE, THE NATIONAL GALLERY (1887). [*J. D. Crace*

PLATE XX

ENTRANCE STAIRCASE, THE NATIONAL GALLERY

The treatment here is founded on the same general principle of carrying up the colour—or at least the colour-value—of the prominent structural features. In this case the columns and pilasters of the principal floor are marble of a deep red tone, with capitals and bases of white marble; all above these is plaster. The general tone of the red marble has been used as the ground of the frieze, and in the margins of the upper panels. The ornamentation of the panels is all in very quiet tones, and the enriched hollow which forms the ring below the glass-dome is relieved by a low-toned blue. It was intended that the wall above the triple entrance arch should be treated pictorially, and so give the entrance importance as a whole. It has been, however, treated, like the other walls, as a ground on which to hang any pictures, and the result of this is unsatisfactory.

accustomed to the atmospheric charm of the unadorned architecture is perhaps not the one which will judge its merits impartially ; and indeed the puritanical aversion to colour which so soon succeeded the erection of St. Paul's is by no means extinct ; but we have here an example of Decorative Art which cannot fail to bring honour to the English art of the nineteenth century.

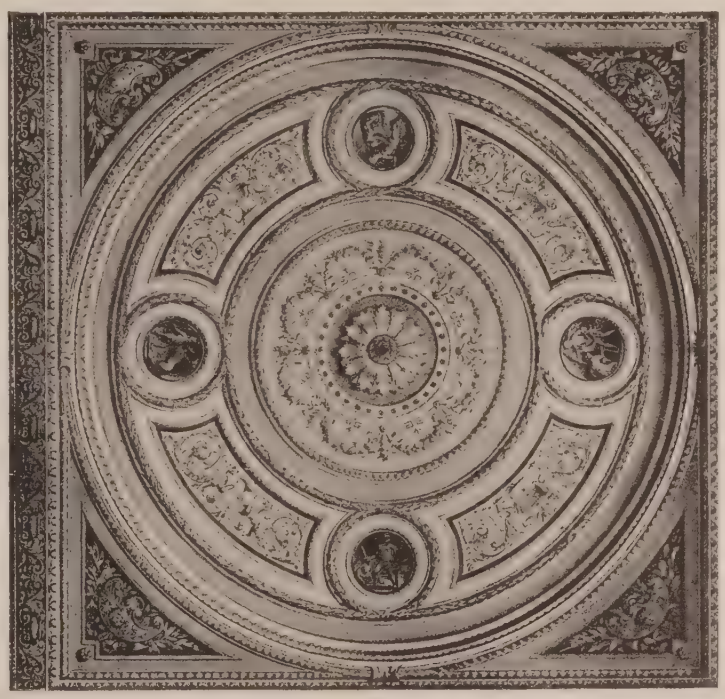

Fig. 14. CEILING, GROSVENOR HOUSE [*J. Gregory Crace*

The ceiling at Longleat, executed about 1880 (shown in the Colour Plate No. XIX), needs no further description than that of its cover-page. It represents a frank adoption not only of the principles, but of what may be called the methods of the Italian masters. This was intentional, for the central feature of the ceiling is actually an old Italian ceiling-painting (not that shown). It was the desire of the owner, the late Marquess of Bath, to produce the effect of that Italian renaissance work of which he had a considerable knowledge and thorough appreciation. It will be seen, the more readily that the illustration is in colour, how, notwithstanding much elaboration, the leading forms are clearly expressed, and the weight of colour so distributed as to throw up the centre of the ceiling.

The entrance staircase of the National Gallery (Plate XX) is part of the addition made by the late Sir John Taylor and opened in 1887—the year of the Queen's Jubilee. The " Colour Decoration " then carried out is sufficiently described in the cover-page to the illustration. It will be seen, however, that the design included a mural painting over the arches of the entrance, which was not undertaken because the authorities could not decide upon the artist to whom it should be entrusted. Its decorative object was to give height and importance to the entrance ; this object was lost in continuing, in that position, the ground-colour of the walls adjoining. As a result the entrance arches, as now seen from the staircase, appear to be half-buried and

somewhat insignificant for a great building. This was an opportunity for the encouragement of English art, the loss of which one cannot but regret.

The small square ceiling (Fig. 14) which was executed at Grosvenor House, was designed by the writer's father, J. Gregory Crace, about 1870. The room contains some of the fine paintings of the owner's collection of "Old Masters," on walls hung with dark red silk. The general colouring of the ceiling is in the low tones of cream-colour, verging on drab, with gold; but its leading forms are marked out by a quiet dark red, which occurs in larger mass in the angle panels. Thus, while there is a recall of the wall colour and of the gilding of the frames, the quiet general tone gives full value to the skies and lights in the pictures, in which these have been necessarily mellowed by time.

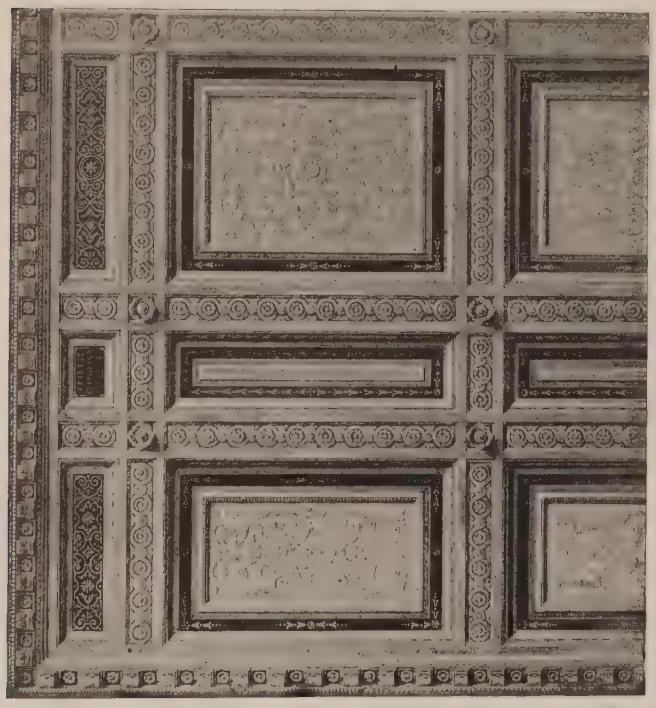

Fig. 15. PART OF CEILING, CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE (*J.D. Crace*, 1895)

The illustration (Fig. 15) shows a portion only of a large horizontal ceiling divided into rectangular panels by enriched beams. Both beams and panels are gilt, the latter ornamented in a semi-transparent golden brown, which softens, but does not conceal, the gold. The dark margins which define the panels are alternately of a rich maroon red and a warm green of a like value. These balance each other, whilst avoiding monotonous repetitions, and recalling the colouring of the mahogany fittings and of the tapestry on the walls, which is also assisted by a secondary margin of a low-toned grey or drab. A point of quiet blue occurs at the intersection of the beams, and small black panels with mottoes, which are introduced at the ends of the ceiling, serve to give value to the low-toned colours.

Fig. 16 is entirely a timber-beam ceiling, beams and planking over them being of the rich yellow-brown tone of yellow deal or pitch pine, the main beams resting on stone corbels which break the frieze line. The only colours used on the timber are black, ivory white, and red. The latter is repeated in the narrow border above the frieze,

which is itself painted deep, warm green, with inscription in quiet vellum colour. Nothing is attempted but to recognise the construction whilst relieving the great mass of the yellow timber, and to afford it support and contrast in the frieze.

The house was built by the late William Burges, who was not, however, responsible for the decoration. This was nevertheless executed in conformity with his general views, and in accordance with that early Gothic style of which he was a master.

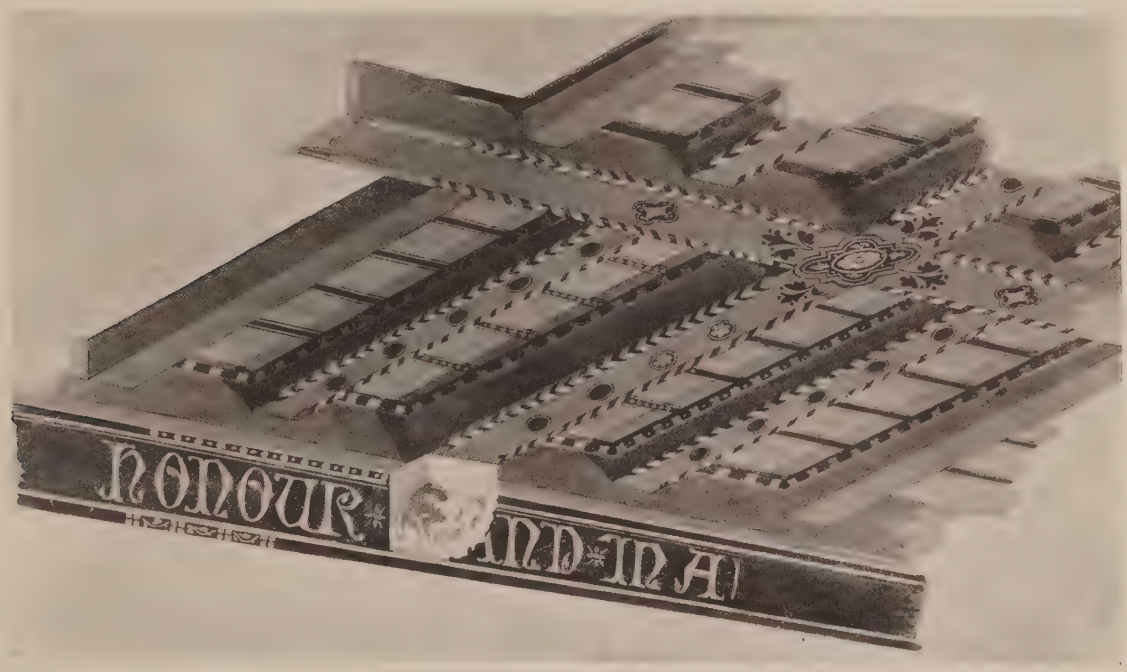

FIG. 16. DECORATION OF TIMBER CEILING, KNIGHTSHAYES, DEVON [*J. D. Crace*, 1885

NOTE.—I feel that some apology is due to the reader for the illustrations or this chapter. That they are selections from my own or my father's works is consequent partly on the fact that I have the drawings, partly that the principles which influenced their design are naturally known to me. In addition, however, there is the reason that these blocks, having already appeared in the *Art Journal* of 1906, I was able to arrange with Messrs. Virtue for their present use. It would, moreover, be a work of some labour to search out and make drawings of suitable examples by other modern artists after permission was obtained.

CHAPTER IX

HINTS ON PRACTICE

IT seems necessary, in order to make this work of practical value to those who are using colour in decoration, to say a few words on some of those general rules in its application which greatly affect its success. They are simple, but important in practice, and their knowledge will save much trouble and disappointment.

Ceilings. It must always be remembered that all colours used on a ceiling appear much darker than they do on the palette. Ceilings by day receive only reflected light, therefore much less than the walls, and of a different quality. This quality depends partly on the floor of the room, often also on the ground outside, for the light from a gravel path is very different from that derived from a green lawn. All reflected light has a yellow tendency. Experimental adjustment on the spot is indispensable.

Coloured Grounds. On a dark or full-toned ground, coloured ornament will appear much lighter than the same would appear on a tinted or light ground. It will also be affected by contrast ; that is to say, the tones in ornament which would appear right on a green or blue ground will be found to look cold and hard on a red ground. In each case the colouring of the ornament must be *toned in the direction of the ground.* The extremes, of course, occur with black and white grounds. Ornament which is to appear gold-colour on black must be painted with a tone little less than brown on the palette, needing to be not only darker, but duller, than when used on any other ground. On the contrary, colours used on white grounds need to be paler and purer in tone than might be anticipated.

The colours used on gold grounds need some vigour, or they will be overcome by the glitter of the gold.

Where coloured grounds are to be applied to ornament in relief, it may be taken as a general rule that the lower the relief the paler and quieter should be the ground colour. But, with strong relief, stronger ground colours are demanded, for the shadows will obliterate pale or ill-defined tones. In the case of *gilt* low relief, however, fuller tones may be used in the grounds.

Gilding is always more effective on curved than on plane surfaces. On the latter

there is always risk of its showing all glare, or all dark. Its greatest value is in the indication of leading lines or constructive features; and, where so used, it must be bold and simple, not frittered in small parts. Bold gilding on constructive lines never looks gaudy; but timid gilding looks tawdry. Used in detached detail it disturbs the eye and destroys the recognition of form.

Attention may be directed to the practice of the great decorative masters with regard to gold grounds. Where they found some risk of the glare of the metal destroying the sense of surface, and leaving the ornament "silhouetted" too sharply, they adopted the expedient of either hatching the gold surface with fine lines, like the joints of mosaic, or of powdering it with small dots. In either case the recognition of surface was restored.

Outline. When two colours, nearly equal in value, are brought into contiguity, they should be divided by a line sufficiently light or dark to define both. Thus a line of softened white, or of gold, or gold-colour, will enable two deep colours to be used almost in contact, when otherwise confusion would result.

Spreading of Light. Ornament in light colour on a dark ground will always appear *thicker* than its actual size. Conversely, dark ornament on a light ground will appear smaller. The light rays spread and overlap the dark.

For analogous reasons the hue of any fairly positive colour, used ornamentally on a light or on a gold ground, will impart some of its quality to the apparent tone of such ground. Thus, a red ornament or even a fine line of red on a cream-white ground will give a pink tone to the cream-white; or used on a neutral grey ground will make the grey appear lilac. Gold grounds are very sensitive to this effect. A small margin of red will give a glowing warmth to the gold, whereas a similar margin of dark blue or green will impart a cool tone to the same ground.

Tone. In writing of colours one can only speak of them in general terms. Red, blue, green, black, white, &c. But, in use, all colours have to be "toned," and, as in music, not only must a certain scale be observed but, in execution, "pitch" also. We speak of "black" and "white." But pure black or pure white should seldom be used. They must almost always be a little "broken."

It is only with a very pure scale of colour and of a high "pitch" that white or black can be used without qualification. Yet, as has already been explained, this qualification may be given by fine lines or ornament superimposed, as an alternative to the direct modifying of their intensity. In the choice of method much will depend on the amount of detail which circumstances permit. It may often be a question of cost.

Ornament. In the use of painted ornamental detail there is the widest scope for the exercise of judgment, because the purpose for which it is used in any position must

determine not only its scale, but to some extent its "*motif*" or direction of line. Thus, if the object is to soften the effect of a ground colour, it may, even in so immense a chamber as the Great Hall of the Scuola di S. Rocco at Venice (Plate XVII), be a mere thread of interlaced pattern ; whereas, if it be required to fill or break up a large surface and to be evident as detail, ornament may be very bold in form, even in a small room, providing that some finer detail is associated with it. In such a case the bolder forms must be very simple, and the more elaborate detail confined to the finer lines.

Again, where coloured ornament is applied to mouldings, it must be of such form as to help express the section or at least not to disguise it. It, in fact, lies under the same conditions as would carved ornament in the same situation. But it may be noted that in deep hollows, or in positions which are definitely in shade, the colour must be fairly strong, never a mere tint ; and in colouring a cornice the line of strongest contrast will fix the apparent height of the wall, unless, indeed, a still stronger colour occurs towards the margin of the ceiling.

EPILOGUE

SOME of my readers may doubtless find criticisms to make on what I have written, or rather, perhaps, on what I have omitted to write. Nothing has been said of the secrets of harmonising colour with colour ; of which *hues* may properly be brought together and in what situations ; nor even has allusion been made to that attractive subject, the Theory of Colour. My reply to these objections is that the omissions are intentional. The study of colour for more than fifty years has convinced me that colour harmony cannot be taught in words ; nor will any theory of colour, by itself, teach a man the harmonious use of colour, any more than eating eggs will teach him successful poultry-farming.

The book is an attempt to impart " principles " which should guide the worker in a beautiful art—principles which guided men whose success in that art is unquestionable, but the reasons of which have been little understood or inquired into.

" Principles " are not the same thing as Theories. They may be considered as the deductions from the accumulated experiences of practice ; sometimes, as in this case, of the practice of generations. Certainly, many a painter's worst failures have been caused by attempting to follow a theory of which he has a bare knowledge, and which is perfectly correct, but which is affected, in practice, by many facts he has not taken into account.

It may not be amiss to remind the reader that the great colourists of the past, such as those whose works are here cited, knew nothing of the " Theory of Colour." The excellence of their skill resulted from the accumulated experience of their predecessors, supplemented by their own keen and intelligent observation. It is the cultivated power of observation which makes the artist ; the talent which he may possess in applying his observations will be the measure of his excellence.

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